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PRISONERS
GRAVE AND GAY

By

R. C. BOND

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PRISONERS GRAVE AND GAY

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by

LIEUT.-COLONEL R. C. BOND, D.S.O.

KING'S OWN YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

AUTHOR OF

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IN THE GREAT WAR, 1914-1918'

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CHAPTER I. CAPTURE.

THE first considerable capture of British prisoners of war made by the Germans in the Great War occurred in August 1914 during the retreat from Mons. Quite reasonably anyone, before reading stories of prisoners, might wish to be informed at the outset how those prisoners came to be captured.

It has been traditional in our Army to 'Yield to none.' Military authorities of all times have condemned soldiers who, without reasonable excuse, have allowed themselves to become prisoners. Napoleon himself refused ever to take notice of an ex-prisoner of war who had returned to France by any other means than that of escape, but his aim was to discourage prisoners in the practice of giving their 'parole' not to escape. One of our own divisional generals, on the eve of Mons, exhorted all the soldiers of his division to fight to the last, and to use their fists even if their ammunition were exhausted. The custom in military circles has been to await the verdict of a Court of Inquiry before pronouncing a prisoner of war free from the stigma attendant on capture by the enemy.

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On the other hand, one cannot overlook the fact that Napoleon was more than once himself a prisoner in the hands of his enemies, and, though he escaped once, he died a prisoner in St Helena. We must remember, too, that in all wars that have ever been waged, there have been instances of surrender before the supreme effort has been made to keep the flag flying, and that such examples have necessitated the enactment of rigid and possibly harsh regulations on the subject of capture.

It is not because there is any need to write a defence of their conduct, and it is certainly not to excite pity, but rather in order to satisfy to some extent a reasonable curiosity, that the incidents leading to the capture of some of the officers and men referred to in these pages will first be chronicled. The story has been told in official and regimental histories, so it is no new one; this account is intended to be more intimate than an official document and to be occupied with more trifling details, albeit it is told from the point of view of one of the older officers of a battalion in the firing line.

Let me say at once that reinstatement did follow the declaration of Courts of Inquiry in this and similar cases, and that a certificate was issued to each officer expressed in these words: "The Secretary of State presents his compliments to . . . and begs to state that he is commanded by the Army Council to inform

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him that his statement regarding the circumstances of his capture having been investigated, the Council considers that no blame attaches to him in the matter." This was equivalent to a 'King's Pardon.' Individual recognition of their services was rendered also in a proportionate number of instances to some officers and men at the end of the war.

The troops who had been ordered to break off the battle on the Mons canal bank after dark on the 23rd August 1914 had fallen back in the night (so far as this story is concerned) to the neighbourhood of Wasmes, where the next day's position had been indicated. The process of falling back was a slow one, for the country was unknown and intricate, owing to its being a densely populated mining district of Belgium, with narrow streets to negotiate and with frequent wire fences dividing the patches of intervening land into fields, where the corn had been recently cut and was standing in sheaves ; slag heaps confronted them on all sides to render the night-marching more difficult. A little after midnight two hours were devoted to rest in the open fields. The men took advantage of the sheaves to protect themselves against the cold night, for most of them were shivering in saturated clothing after clambering through the dykes by which the land in the neighbourhood of the canal was intersected. Before dawn they were marching on again to

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take up a position for the second day's fighting.

The second day was a replica of the first, but this day the order to retire came in the morning, and the retirement had to be conducted in the full light of day. By mid-day the troops were in full retreat, a part engaged in fighting a rearguard action under the fire of enemy guns and rifles. At nightfall a bivouac was ordered in the fields behind Bavai, and here the emergency rations were eaten, as the supply wagons were out of touch. In the night the retreat was again renewed, and the highroad from Bavai, towards St Quentin and Paris, was taken. This road led through the forest of Mormal; halts on the road were frequent, for the way was congested with traffic; there was no food; there were skirmishes in the air, rearguard actions for some of the infantry companies, the constant pounding of guns and rumours of cavalry actions. What concerned the soldiers most was the sight of the fleeing Belgian population, accompanied by wagons and carts of every description heaped with their family goods. Why were we marching in the wrong direction? How was it we were leaving this smiling country to destruction at the hands of the Germans? A few days ago on these or parallel roads the British regiments had swung gaily forward, their drums or bugles playing at the head of the columns, hailed as

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deliverers by the smiling inhabitants, loaded with gifts, sometimes garlanded with flowers. To-day they were slogging along in the reverse direction, exhausted, grave and sullen. To the Belgian mind some awful catastrophe must have happened ; it was passed from village to village that the Germans were coming. Among the British troops there was anger and resentment at the idea of abandoning the Belgians. Men regarded it as an undeserved slur that, unbeaten, full of fight and eager to do their best, their orders should compel them to appear in the eyes of foreigners as dogs with their tails between their legs, as skulkers from the fight.

The orders were remorseless, and the retreat carried on. A gleam of brightness now and then infused some spirit into the marching, as when a German aeroplane on one occasion was shot down by a British fighter close by the line of march, or when, a little short of Le Cateau, the column was halted to allow several regiments of French cavalry (Gen. Sordet's) to file across the road ahead. So there were French cavalry after all ! And these regiments were crossing the road from south to north, in the direction of the northern or exposed flank of the British forces. General Smith-Dorrien, whose features were well known to the troops, was waiting in a closed car outside Le Cateau by the roadside. His anxious eyes scanned the faces of the weary soldiers, gauging the degree of

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their exhaustion. In the men his presence created confidence, and they quickly concluded that here they were arriving at a pre-determined position, where, in union with the French troops, our army would turn and rend the oncoming foe.

We were now in France ; the character of the country had undergone a change since Belgium was left behind. After passing through Mormal forest wide open spaces were reached. Leaving Le Cateau on the left, lying in a hollow, the tired troops came to rest in open rolling country among the cornfields. Here the wagons were able to rejoin, and a meal could be provided in the evening. The men spread themselves in sleep, untroubled by any premonitions of the day ahead of them. The sheaves of wheat again were used for bedding down.

Arrangements for the following day occupied the minds of those whose duties really commenced with the halt.

One battalion of our brigade had been almost wiped out in the fighting at Wasmes, the others being comparatively intact.

With the last lingering gleams of daylight one company from each of two battalions was sent down the road eastwards to throw out a line of outposts to protect what we then understood to be the Le Cateau position. Another brigade on the right was covering the little town itself.

The night was hardly one of comfort. It rained heavily, and the men were lying in the

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open. About 2 A.M. on the 26th, brigade orders for the day were received ; these entailed yet another retirement for the troops. The two battalions which were already represented in the outpost line were ordered to occupy a line of trenches and to act as a rearguard to cover the retirement of the rest. It was regarded as possible that by 11 A.M. the transport trains retiring along the roads would be so well clear that the rearguard troops might at that hour be able to fall back from the Le Cateau position.

At 4 A.M. the rearguard troops were moving forward to take up the new positions. In the darkness it was difficult to recognise the line ; it was found that already short stretches of shallow entrenchments had been commenced (under supervision) by the French inhabitants before the troops marched in. At least these scratchings indicated the general trend of the chosen line ; it was the business of the rearguard to improve them until they should be sufficiently deep to cover the defenders. The general line ran parallel to the road leading from Le Cateau to Cambrai, which cut across the road by which we had marched in the previous day. The stock of tools was gravely insufficient, and the little equipment tools carried by the men were inadequate for the purpose. There were no trenches indicated for the supports, nor for that portion of the line on the right which proved to be the key of the position, overlooking the

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valley in which the town of Le Cateau lay. Soon all energies were concentrated on preparations to withstand the coming onslaught which was known to be a certainty.

With the dawning day the weak points of the position became evident. Between the front line of trenches and the position of the infantry reserves the field artillery of the division were already in position and were preparing for action; there were gaps between battalions, and there was dead ground in front, under cover of which the enemy would be protected in his approach up to within three or four hundred yards of the position.

However, the die was cast; some modifications could yet be executed, and they were, but the approach of daylight made such operations increasingly dangerous, and later, desperate, for the enemy held positions from which the trench digging could easily be observed.

The first care was to feed the men; the cooks were brought forward in order to issue hot tea before daylight.

About 6 A.M. there arrived a final order from the brigade, the last written order that reached battalion headquarters that day. It was to the effect that there could be no retirement now for the 'fighting troops' of the rear-guard; they must be self-sufficient, and must fight to the end. Bugler-messengers were at once despatched on foot with copies of this

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message to the various infantry companies. The ammunition reserve was called up; the mule-carts at their fastest pace brought the boxes up the road, and turned off into the fields to dump the ammunition behind the sheaves of corn. It was broad daylight, and the galloping mules must have been conspicuous on the skyline.

My friend Charles Yate was in the trenches in charge of the forward line. I felt it so important that he should have the message and realise its implications that I went down to him, and found him working feverishly with a little entrenching tool. The men around him were straining every nerve to create the necessary amount of cover, the trench line at this point being dug in the side of the Bavai-Reumont road and facing south by east. In consequence, as the road to his left led direct in the enemy's direction, unless the men got some lateral cover as well as cover from the front, they would be exposed to view and fire. So Yate had ordered each man to create a little bay for himself, encroaching slightly on the road.

"Have you had my message about no retirement?"

"Yes, yes," he said. "I understand, and all it means; there is not a moment to lose," and he dug faster and more furiously.

I had already commenced to clear for action, and had sent back our grooms with our horses

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to join the battalion baggage column, knowing that we could not conceivably require their services again. When the first German guns began to range on us I felt anxious for the transport when I saw an undoubted 'bracket,' one shell beyond, and one just short of, the depression in the ground where I knew the baggage column to be standing, so orders were sent to the transport officer at once to move his column farther back.

No trench had been dug for the headquarters of the battalion. I had given my position to the brigade early in the morning—viz.: close by the roadside, near the crest of the modest slope overlooking the forward line. We had one equipment shovel between us, and the four members of my little party took turns to throw up the soil and make a shallow trench. This trifling bit of cover became the temporary shelter of a series of visitors during the day. The commander of the brigade that was brought in on our right to occupy the vital position overlooking Le Cateau joined me for a time with his brigade-major. The machine-gun detachment of one of his battalions fell back to it later on, creating an uncomfortable congestion by its presence; the sergeant of the party was a heavy man, and gained about as much shelter as he lay on top of us as an ostrich does when he hides his head in the sand to escape his pursuers.

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We had to take in one man as a permanent lodger who had received a bullet through him as he attempted to dash across the road.

Our last official visitor before the curtain rose had been a staff officer, who came to repeat the order for NO RETIREMENT, and sought to encourage us with the remark, "At any rate, to-day you will get the target you have been waiting for." He was looking on the bright side of things!

Following close upon the ranging shells from the German guns came a devastating pounding from guns of various descriptions. Our guns were their first and most important objective, and continued to be so till one felt that in their neighbourhood nothing could be left alive. Their teams were hidden in a sunken road which ran diagonally to Troisvilles from Le Cateau, cutting the Bavai road not very far ahead of our headquarter trench. It was obvious that our guns were very greatly outnumbered; one after another they were knocked out or reduced to silence, but some still were able to reply. Some time after mid-day there came a pronounced burst of activity and a concentrated fire from the enemy's guns and infantry; one felt that something special was being enacted. Suddenly over the brow of the slope came one of our guns and then another, galloping like mad. The order had been issued to retire our guns. Of two brigades of field

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artillery in our section of the front I believe these were the only two guns that were rescued from the line. The nearest passed within a hundred yards of us. (On the following day as prisoners we saw from the windows of our temporary prison a melancholy procession of captured field-guns, on the patched remnants of their carriages, being towed through the main street of Le Cateau.)

Our infantry had been in action—first against patrols ; later against infantry in denser formation and machine-gun batteries—from early morning. But a portion of Yate's line was bent back at right angles to the rest ; this he kept in hand and undiscovered till about 11 A.M., when at last he had formed masses in his front. He opened fire then from an unexpected quarter, his rifles doing enormous execution, for he had indeed that target which his military training had led him to desire.

After our guns had been finally disposed of, the enemy turned his batteries against our infantry defences. In imitation warfare I have watched the effect of concentrated gun-fire, during practice camps, on systems of defence provided for the purpose, and I have idly wondered what it would be like to be a marker in a shell-proof casing in the butts when the firing was going on. I now realised what it felt like to be a marker in the butts without the shell-proof casing. The sensation of being

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under shell-fire became too well known generally in the days that followed for it to be profitable for me to enlarge on it here. We had built up a little traverse across the exposed end of our little trench in order to make it possible to lift our heads without being exposed to view from the dangerous east. The traverse had for its foundation some earth-filled ammunition boxes, and we made it fairly solid. This was lucky, for it doubtless saved us when one shell pitched immediately at its base. I suppose it was due to the heaviness of the air engendered by the bombardment that I grew drowsy for a time during the pounding and could not keep awake; the drowsiness was common to us all. When I woke and looked abroad the face of the scene was changing; our neighbours were being withdrawn; some of the more exposed positions had been vacated. Then I realised that we were face to face with isolation, and that the Germans were already in possession of some of the ridge between us and Le Cateau; we could tell this from the 'zip-zip' of the bullets, which peppered us from that direction.

I thought the time had come when I should ask for confirmation of the "no retirement" order. Though our duty as a rearguard was obvious, it was possible that something might be left to my discretion. The battalion machine-gun officer, who had joined me when his guns had been shot out of action, volunteered to

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carry a message to the brigade; being short and very active, he stood a better chance of being able to deliver it. He found the brigade intermediate station, to which I had previously sent messages, to be abandoned; and he came back to report that the troops, with the exception of ourselves and part of a battalion on our left, had, as far as he could see, withdrawn.

The gallant companies in the trenches meanwhile were plainly full of fight. By turns they reserved their fire, and then fired bursts of 'rapid' each time the Germans showed signs of closing in.

Our own "Cease Fire" call was sounded on German bugles, presumably as a signal to summon us to surrender, but the call was replied to with a salvo of rifle-fire.

The bullets from rifles and machine-guns pattered like rain against the slight target of our trench-mound. The pelting of the bullets was now so constant that all but the briefest exposure meant certain death.

The next move on the part of the enemy was to send a white flag down the Bavai road towards our companies. Yate refused to let the flag advance, and opened fire overhead to explain matters. His attitude typified that of the officers and men of the firing line. Yate was the senior officer in that line; the credit for the defence was equally deserved in every section of it, for there was no communicating

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trench to link up its sections. The V.C. which was conferred on Yate after his death was a recognition of the action of the whole firing line who maintained the defence to the last.

The orders we had received had been so clear, and they had come direct from brigade and divisional commanders, that it was not open to doubt that they were deliberate. However, when it became obvious that ammunition was wellnigh exhausted and that the number of firers was rapidly dwindling, the question suggested itself to me whether the time had not arrived when an effort should be made to preserve the lives of the remaining defenders of the trenches by surrendering. There was no other action by which one could either support or rescue them. After weighing the conditions, however, it seemed unquestionable that the only consideration that could be allowed to influence the decision was the prolongation of the resistance to the utmost limit of time, and so I finally decided against the idea.

My adjutant, ever thoughtful and wise, suggested that the time had come to dispose of all copies of orders and documents that might be useful to the enemy. We did this by tearing them into little bits and pushing them into the soil beneath us.

The defence had arrived almost at General Fergusson's *reductio ad absurdum*, namely, fists versus bullets.

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There came a total cessation of the firing ; there was an ominous stillness ; the noise of battle had passed on and was rolling away behind us.

The end, whatever it was to be, was impending.

A hasty glance : the low ground is a sea of blue-grey uniforms.

Another glance : we are on the point of being engulfed.

Suddenly someone says, " Here they come ! "

I passed the word to stand up (as on a field day at home when the " Cease Fire " sounds). We stood up in the trench, which hardly came above our knees. A line of Germans came for us, running with bayonets at the charge.

A sudden sharp order was given from an unlooked-for quarter. A German officer, up to this moment unseen, was behind us as we stood. At his word the soldiers threw up the bayonet points and surrounded us. He spoke to us in French and said we were prisoners of war. Our equipment was taken, and we were marched down the road under charge of a corporal to Yate's trenches.

Yate was standing in the centre of the roadway shouting in voluble German (he had been partly educated in Germany) to a German battalion commander. He kept repeating the words, " I will never consider myself a prisoner of the Germans—I ask you to shoot me now—

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"I will not be a prisoner!" Poor Charles! He was the very last man whom his friends could have visualised as a prisoner of war. A distinguished soldier, who had been British attaché at Japanese headquarters during the Russo-Japanese war, he had imbibed much of the Japanese philosophy, and he had the courage of his convictions. Quite recently in an article in one of the service periodicals he had expressed his opinion that no soldier should allow himself to be taken alive. And now he had been overpowered by Germans, who came upon him from behind just as he stepped out of his trench in order to charge, revolver in hand, into the advancing line.

We were now under orders, as we stood upon the road, and we were actually under the fire of one or two of our own field-guns, so we had to move away and leave Yate to his argument. The German officer whom he was addressing was noticeably patient, and was evidently determined not to take Yate at his word.

Later on, when at Torgau (in Saxony), we heard the sequel to the episode in Yate's own words.

CHAPTER II. THE KENNELS.

As I stood in a little column of captives in the main street of Le Cateau in the evening, surrounded by soldiers who constituted our guard and were awaiting orders for our disposal, the sense of calamity was strong upon me: one was troubled with vain guesses at the extent of the losses that had overtaken one's side in the battle, of the losses in one's own battalion in particular.

The German soldiers were obviously glad to relax from the tension of the day's fighting; few words were spoken; most of them were munching food which they had carried in their haversacks. A man standing next to me eyed me from time to time with a kind of tenderness, with the proprietary interest of the owner of a new dog. I observed that he drew a slab of chocolate from his pocket. The day was still hot; the soldier was hotter. From the way the chocolate bent limply over, when he released it from its paper wrapper, I knew that it, too, was suffering from the heat to a degree commensurate with its surroundings. We were standing close pressed in the column. I dis-

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covered that some warm substance was surreptitiously being pressed into my hand: it was a portion of the chocolate! Like a hungry dog I ate it.

There was the unexpected report of a rifle-shot at close quarters. Instantly all the soldiers were on the alert. Orders were shouted, the prisoners were bundled into the garden of a house, the street was cleared. Someone of the inhabitants, possibly demented by exasperation, had fired a shot from a window into the column of German soldiers down below. No doubt vengeance was taken on the firer, and possibly the innocent suffered with the guilty.

The house where the prisoners were collected was the finest house in the street. It was the home of a manufacturer, with a good garden at the back and a large building containing work-rooms and warehouses on the far side of the garden. The prisoners occupied two large rooms on the first floor.

The house evidently had been ransacked. The remnants of furniture and the paper on the walls bore witness to the comfortable well-to-do circumstances of the owner. Nearly everything portable had been removed, including carpets, pictures and books; but a handsome piano, one or two little calf-bound volumes of poetry and a pack of playing-cards were among the objects which had survived. There were also in the house an old butler and a cook.

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The room into which we were at first crowded had been the drawing-room ; the meals which the good old servants contrived for us were served in the dining-room.

That first night was a nightmare. I found a place under the grand piano in which to stretch myself ; there seemed to be less chance of being walked upon there. There were lights in the room during the night at times, candles as far as I can remember, by which I saw an officer whom I knew being carried in, apparently in a dying condition. He was badly shot about with shrapnel bullets, and a mattress was placed for him on the floor. Later there were lights again when a French priest was brought in at the request of the wounded man, who was a Roman Catholic. Though our friend was not expected to live many hours he did as a matter of fact recover, and turned up months later in one of the internment camps.

Never in my life had I been so untrammelled by possessions of any kind. With nothing but the clothes I stood up in—for even my handkerchief, which was a silk one, had been taken from me on the battlefield—there seemed to be a strange sentiment of vacuity about life. The ‘getting up’ in the morning consisted merely of rising to one’s feet, but there was a promise later on of a turn at a hand basin in the lavatory, and the butler raised hopes of food.

I cannot omit to record the admirable manner

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in which the two servants contended with all kinds of difficulties and managed to feed us during the four days we were quartered on them. The meals they prepared for us were not always served, for sometimes they were consumed entirely by the guard: the greediest of the guards further embarrassed the servants by carrying off also the cooking pots and table service. Still they managed somehow to keep us fed, though punctuality had become one of the lost virtues.

The workrooms and warehouses across the garden meanwhile were congested with wounded soldiers, and at first there were no doctors. Two officers of the Suffolk regiment, who spoke German and knew how to make themselves useful in a hospital ward, were given permission to go to the temporary hospital and do what they could for the more urgent cases. The conditions under which they worked were deplorable, and their ministrations were of necessity very inadequate, but they did their best. No other prisoners were permitted to go to help them. Later, doctors, who were members of units passing through, were temporarily detached for duty from day to day.

Through the mediation of the French butler a few necessities, such as razors, soap and towels, were purchased from a shop in the town.

The morning after the battle, for a time, the windows of the drawing-room which looked out

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on the street were permitted to be open, and the prisoners grouped themselves by them to look down upon the scene in the street, which was a busy one. The German troops who had occupied the town during the night were to be seen marching out to take the road and follow up our forces in their retirement towards Paris.

At one time some field batteries clattered by on the paved road. At the head of one battery there rode a smart young commander. As he passed he chanced to look up at the windows and saw who were the occupants. It gave one rather a shock when he said quite brightly in English, "Everything all right, I hope?"

This was not the only German who had a kindly word to say to the prisoners. There were two others at least, both staff officers, who came out of their way, passed the guard and entered the house to speak to the prisoners. Both spoke English as if it were their native tongue, and each explained that he had come in to remind us that the Germans had great difficulties to encounter in the enemy's country, which made it imperative to treat prisoners with little ceremony, and they begged us not to attempt any escape and not to be insubordinate to the guard, either of which might jeopardise the lives of the lot, so long as we were so near to the front. I mention these evidences of chivalrous feeling displayed by the fighting troops in the front line, as they stood

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out in our memories later in sharp contrast to the treatment which some prisoners experienced in the supporting lines and in Germany itself.

The prisoners were far from being resigned to their fate, and tempers were short in consequence ; in fact, when nerves are on edge there is a natural tendency to growl. Some found quite unreasonable causes for taking offence. Objection was taken to X. because he was too fat and ate too much, or he looked as if he might eat too much if he got the chance. Complaints were voiced against Y. because it was said he had bribed the guard to let him take a bath in the bathroom without letting his fellows into the secret that there was a bathroom ; and so on. The Germans delivered a consignment of greatcoats, brought in from the battlefield for distribution among the prisoners, to take the place of blankets. There was an unnecessary delay in the issue, so some prisoners thought. The British staff officer appointed by the senior officer to deal with the issue thought it necessary to make lists and duplicate lists as for articles delivered from store. The prisoners grew impatient and carried off greatcoats to their sleeping-places on the floor. Regulation coats are stamped inside with the initials of the regiment of ownership : some of the prisoners were morbidly fastidious, and when the issuing officer wished to distribute coats strictly in

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accordance with the height of the applicants, the latter discovered that nice fitting was a consideration that did not weigh with them, and that if they had to wrap themselves in a blood-stained cloak they preferred that the stains should be from the blood of one of their own regiment.

Altogether it was a period, though mercifully a short one, of unhappy memory.

CHAPTER III. ON THE LEAD.

Down the white ribbon of the road leading from Le Cateau to Cambrai marched a grim little column of men.

At their head rode a young subaltern of a Prussian Guards regiment astride an obviously commandeered cob with a rough coat and grass belly, the saddle and bridle strangely out of keeping with the spick-and-span guardsman's uniform. The German escort, with bayonets fixed and no great outward show of discipline, swung along in front, on either flank and in the rear of the prisoners. The senior prisoners marched in front; some were bandaged in the head, neck or arms, but all were fit to march. There was an empty country cart at the tail of the column, in which the officers of field rank had been invited to ride, but this had been disdained.

The road was bordered on either side with poplars: here and there it passed through cuttings, and it was here that those who had had charge of the rearguard in the battle five weary days ago took stock mentally of the lie of the land. This road along which they were

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marching ran directly past the position which this and other remnants of the 5th Division had been left behind to hold. Signs of the recent battle were not wanting : here was the position with its hastily made shelter-pits and piles of empty cartridge-cases at the crest of a cutting, which had been held by a German machine-gun detachment ; there, poplars were riven and splintered ; there, houses were wrecked and unroofed by shell-fire ; but the dead had been collected and buried by gangs of the French inhabitants, who had worked under the orders of the German clearing parties. Organised cleaning had done its work.

The day was hot and breathless, for it was the end of August. Five days spent cooped up in close confinement in a house in a street of Le Cateau had not tended to improve the prisoners' marching powers, and so when the mid-day halt and rest came there was a general sigh of relief. Halting in the hot sun among the stooks of corn on the edge of the field by the roadside afforded an opportunity not to be neglected to dry shirts and spread garments in the sun. A travelling kitchen was brought up, and a meal was provided in the form of stew with vegetables. A queue was made, and a dipperful of stew was served to each prisoner after the escort had eaten their fill. Desperate were the last-moment devices to be in possession of a receptacle to take a share, when it

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was discovered that without a tin or plate of some kind the portion would have to be taken in the hands. These prisoners had no visible worldly possessions apart from the clothes they stood up in. Appetite became the parent of improvisation.

Some of the prisoners' guards, who had been daily changed when in Le Cateau, had at first been almost kindly, but this day the escort were grim and uncompromising—grimmer, in fact, than any previous escort. Their attitude on the march had been not only uncommunicative but sullenly hostile, and there was a note of malice in the songs of triumph with which the soldiers whiled away the hours of the march. The young officer in charge, who belonged to a different regiment to the soldiers, rode on some distance ahead, and whatever it was that was brewing in the minds of the men was unmarked and unheeded by him. Still the presence of an officer with the party, even of one so junior and so grotesquely mounted, was a restraining influence. He had done his duty at the mid-day halt, standing by the travelling kitchen when the food was issued, and seeing that any tendency to economise at the expense of the prisoners was overruled.

While half-clothed during the halt, it had not been very difficult for some of the officer prisoners to pass from their place in the column and mix with their fellows at the other end, and in this

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way several had an opportunity of a farewell chat for a few moments with some of their N.C.O.'s and men, and of offering a few words of warning and advice.

Things had not been going too well with the Germans, who had obviously been disappointed with what they had achieved at Le Cateau, and who had since been outmanœuvred by the 'contemptible little army,' who had repeatedly eluded entanglement in their retreat. Perhaps a widespread feeling of soreness and disappointment might partially account for the increase of bitterness which was itself so evident? Be that as it may, it had been very seriously impressed on the seniors of the party before setting out that should one prisoner attempt to make his escape on the march, or should one man act insubordinately, the escort had orders to take what measures they deemed necessary—in fact, as it was put, to kill the lot if they had trouble.

At length Cambrai, the destination, was reached. The march had not been a long one, but under the circumstances it had been sufficiently trying and men were looking eagerly for any signs of a possibility to quench a raging thirst. Several empty streets were traversed on the road to the railway station. In the neighbourhood of the station, masses of German motor vehicles were parked, and the arrival of the column of prisoners was the signal for a

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crowd of transport men, drivers, cooks and orderlies to assemble on the road. The prisoners were halted on a wide pathway with a wall alongside. Placed at intervals along the edge of the path were buckets of alluring fresh water, cool and clear, evidently intended for the column. No order had yet been given to drink, and after the halt was made the young officer rode on into the railway station, no doubt to receive his further orders.

Quickly the prisoners realised that they were now at the mercy of their escort and the crowd of camp-followers. After being kept standing a little time, during which onslaughts were made by souvenir-hunters on the uniforms of the unprotected—onslaughts which it was futile to resent or resist—they received the order from the escort to sit on the ground with their backs to the wall. Some of the escort then proceeded to harangue the crowd ; then they deliberately kicked over the water-buckets and wasted the precious water in the gutter. The crowd of onlookers assumed a more threatening attitude than the escort even. They took the game into their own hands ; darting in here and there, they threatened any prisoner whose appearance or demeanour was particularly offensive to them ; they insulted them by gesture or by words, and by every possible provocation attempted to draw a reply that could be construed into an excuse for action. But even in this crowd,

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excited and angry, shouting, gesticulating and spurring one another on to spit, to kick, to force a quarrel, there were two or three English-speaking Germans, no doubt fresh from English houses, whose memories maybe of hospitalities recently received were not obliterated, whose object it now became to save the prisoners from the mob. These men, pushing in amongst the most active and vehement with an outward show of fury, spoke rapidly in English to one man and then another, imploring them in some cases not to smile (for "Nothing," they said, "infuriates Germans more than the British officers' smile") or not to resent the loss of a badge from the uniform, or again not to rise to the feet to refute an insult or resent a blow.

Fate hung in the balance. The waiting seemed interminable. Were these gibes and sneers—many of them uttered in English—and these threats ever going to stop? Was the mob mad? Was this the ordinary treatment that a prisoner of war might expect at the hands of his captors in this 'civilised' twentieth century? Surely it was something more than the customary daily hate? It all seemed inexplicable. Not that prisoners expected kindness or asked for courtesy. That was far from their thoughts. But there was something exceptional and unexpected in the attitude of these men of the second line, the camp-followers of a great army.

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An incident of the third day of the retirement from Mons now recurred to some minds to add force to the present experiences. It was during a halt on the road, which was temporarily blocked by the congestion of retiring troops, when an officer at the head of a British Infantry battalion found himself alongside a line of British ambulances. Seeing a wounded German cavalry officer lying in one of the ambulances, this officer paused to say a considerate word to him. The German was somewhat astonished at the courtesy of the British officer addressing him, and answered his inquiry as to whether he had had every attention paid to him in his wounded state much in these words, "Yes, thank you, indeed more than I could have expected under the circumstances, but I am unhappy to think that my own people are not likely to treat your wounded in the same way!" It had already been put about in the German armies that the English had openly boasted that they were going to kill the German wounded who fell into their hands. In support of this a garbled version of General Sir Charles Fergusson's speech to his 5th Division was shortly afterwards quoted in all the German papers, in which the General was reported to have given orders that no prisoners were to be made.

At last after waiting for hours, as it seemed, the officer in charge of the escort appeared with a superior officer and handed over his charge.

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The crowd, who had never quite succeeded in lashing themselves into blind fury, sullenly broke up with many maledictions directed against the prisoners, who were marched into the railway station to take their places in the crowded compartments of a train awaiting them.

There was a good deal of reshuffling of the prisoners in their compartments during the long wait before the train moved out. Contingents of French prisoners continued to arrive, which necessitated a closer packing. There was the better part of a battalion of little dark-skinned men of some French marine contingent. These were accompanied by some baggage; they had with them hampers uniformly packed to be put into their compartments; the hampers contained red wine, rolls and other foods, and cigarettes. The German sentries were constantly getting in and out of the compartments; there was a good deal of excitement; the hampers were shoved into the train, taken out and again distributed. In the last distribution one of the sentries attached to our compartment of British prisoners apparently managed to have one surplus hamper, which he hid under the seat of the carriage. He and his comrade were evidently going to take no chances about their supplies. The same soldier smuggled a great glass carafe full of water from the waiting-room into the compartment, which also promptly

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disappeared under the seat. This water, procured at considerable risk, he had procured for his prisoners, and later, when the train had started, he allowed some of it to be conveyed in water-bottles to the thirsty occupants of the neighbouring compartments.

Eventually a start was made on the slow and laborious journey through Belgium into Germany. The tracks of the railway lines were regarded with the gravest suspicion by the drivers, and the trains crawled gingerly over them, sometimes going back on their tracks for miles when they had apparently overshot the points or when they suspected mines or had taken the wrong road. It passed through armies on the march, skirted Louvain, blackened by recent fires, entered the big station at Brussels, where some of the officers managed to communicate their names on slips of paper (the recipients appeared later to have found a channel by which the names were communicated to their friends in England), and so crept on to Cologne.

Officially no food and no water were allowed to prisoners on the train. The coaches were of the lowest class without the ordinary conveniences. That mid-day stew on the march to Cambrai was the last food that many were to taste before the evening of the second day after the train had started.

Lucky were the prisoners who got a little

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water to quench their thirst. The prisoners sat ten in a compartment, including two of the guard, on hard seats with all the windows closed. Sleep was the consoler, fitful, uneasy, broken by dreams, interrupted by joltings and the crossing of points; yet sleep it was that came at times. It was odd to wake to find the head of a snoring German soldier resting on one's shoulder: stranger still to find oneself accepting a drink of water and a crust of bread surreptitiously introduced by the same little soldier in the dead of night during a prolonged halt at a wayside station. This soldier was a man of resource, and, to his credit be it chronicled, he did not forget the prisoners in his charge.

Hope springs eternal in the human breast; it distinguishes man from the beasts. Without hope and faith and without the consoling conviction that a duty had been performed and that each had given of his best, this first acquaintance with the realities of captivity must have spelt despair to many.

CHAPTER IV. THE DOG-SHOWS.

WHEN the first large batch of British prisoners entered Germany by train in 1914 it was Sedan Day, the 1st September. Everywhere the country was out to celebrate a Roman triumph. The engines of the trains were garlanded; branches of evergreen and flowers decorated the carriages. The trains made slow progress through Westphalia; stations were thronged with seething masses of holiday citizens; the German 'Red Cross' women were to the fore on all the platforms serving out food, drinks and cigars to the soldiers of the escorts on the trains. A sharp distinction was made between prisoners and their escorts. The former were only permitted to watch the soldiers filling themselves up with food. On one occasion a German boy was so misguided as to bring a cupful of water to a wounded British prisoner. An indignant woman wearing the 'brassard' of the Red Cross pounced upon him, upset the cup and exclaimed, "No water for prisoners!"

At Cologne way was made along the edge of the platform, which seethed with sightseers, for a very important frock-coated gentleman to

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pay a visit to each compartment. He addressed a few words in English to the occupants of each carriage to this effect: "You English will no doubt like to hear the news: well, our armies expect to be in Paris in a week. Your little army is now cut off from the sea; we have seven millions of men in arms. To-day we have a very pleasant piece of news from the East front also—we have taken 48,000 Russian prisoners. You English officers can play 'tennis,' but it appears you cannot fight: good morning, gentlemen." This speech afforded quite a useful lesson in self-restraint. Many great-toes must have tingled to touch the coat-tails of this ungenerous gentleman.

At some stations the trains steamed in to the accompaniment of national songs, finely rendered by German soldiers, whose trains were waiting on the sidings in their progress up to the front. There was energy and enthusiasm about these songs, and when one in particular was sung to the air of "God save the King," it almost appeared for a moment that the throaty serenaders were paying the prisoners the compliment of chanting the British National Anthem.

It was very soon realised, however, that compliments were far from the minds of German soldiers, or for that matter, of the German civilian population, and that the air to which we are accustomed to sing our National Anthem has been borrowed from us by the Germans

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and adapted for their own use. Chivalry, as it was practised between nations, is practically a thing of the past: a century previous to the Great War it was in process of disappearing. Whether modern civilisation, under the name of Progress, will supply something better to take its place, remains to be discovered. Writing in 1813 of his experiences in the Peninsular War, Larpent, in his Diary, which was at one period much read for the interesting sidelight which it threw on the current events, declared that the war in Spain towards its close was being conducted with an unusual lack of chivalry and with unwonted bitterness, and he instances the fact that when he, a non-combatant Judge-Advocate-General, fell into the hands of the French shortly after the battle of Vittoria, instead of being returned to the British lines immediately, with an apology to Lord Wellington for the inconvenience he must have suffered, he was actually held like any other prisoner pending the arrangement of an exchange for some French civilian!

At the very commencement of the war in 1914 the Germans 'shocked' their antagonists by an entirely new departure in warfare. They made prisoners of (and treated in a precisely similar way to their other prisoners) army medical officers and ambulance 'personnel,' including army chaplains, who walked into their hands in the pursuit of their humanitarian professions.

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In 1914 one expected to find a certain amount of dignity and even chivalry in the higher ranks of the German officers, but it was in those ranks (in this the prisoners may have been unlucky in their experiences) that these qualities were found to be most notably lacking. As an instance, on one occasion of this journey a German General, from a window of his first-class carriage, which was attached to a train waiting in a station, ordered the windows of the carriages of a train-load of British prisoners of war to be lowered on his side of the train. The prisoners were told to go to the windows, only to be greeted on the part of the General with a torrent of abuse and the repetition of the old word "Schweinehunden." There was something very bald and vitriolic about this German hatred for the British.

The second day in the train was a repetition of the first. If anything the train seemed to wander out of the direct route in an even more dilatory manner than before : this was annoying because it seemed to postpone the next meal so indefinitely. The driver of the train appeared to have friends to whom he wished to show off the prisoners in the most out-of-the-way places, and would stop quite a long time at a siding hooting to give the inhabitants a chance of putting on their coats to come and see the wild beasts.

In the evening the train pulled up at what

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looked like a rest camp of wooden huts. An electrifying message was passed along informing the prisoners that they could get out and have a meal. It was literally true. This was a halting camp. Here indeed was a contractor who had a meal prepared. Memory can hardly be expected to be exact about the details of the meal; it was ample to satisfy the cravings of hunger, but a little too hurried. Possibly the contractor was in league with the engine driver, and was a little alarmed at the exhibition of appetite which he witnessed, while the price that he could charge was limited. There was bread and there were slices of cold sausage; there were pickles also. The sausages were various, large and small, red with white spots, black with white spots, and strong brown liver sausage. The prisoners trooped back contentedly to their train, prepared to carry on till their arrival next evening at Torgau in Saxony.

The Schweinehunds had begun to think they were accustomed to dog-shows now, but all previous shows were eclipsed by the éclat of their arrival at the end of their journey. It was late evening. The station platform was brilliantly lit; a strong wooden rail had been erected down the centre of the platform; a guard of armed and helmeted German soldiers was drawn up facing the train; behind the wooden handrail was an excited crowd of mafficking citizens.

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As the prisoners stepped down to the platform derisive cheers were raised, songs were sung, and then came volleys of greetings in German and some in English. It was like leaving an English football ground after a big match down a lane formed to the dressing-pavilion, except for the nature of the greetings! They consisted chiefly of assurances of undying hatred and threats: "You come from London, you pig-dogs, you shall never see London again," and so on. The escort were well drilled and had their orders: the prisoners were formed in a column of threes, with parties of soldiers at the head and tail, and a man of the escort on either flank of each section of three. The reason for this was seen when the column emerged from the station.

The city was *en fête*, decorated with lamps and with flags everywhere. On stages in front of the houses or at the porches were parties of people seated as for a play. The wide open square into which the column moved was packed with sightseers, as were the streets through which the procession passed. Two brass bands picked up the column in the square and played, one at the head, the other at the tail, sometimes simultaneously. It was a tumultuous scene. No progress at all could be made for minutes at a time; the whole mass of people seemed to be trying to get at the prisoners. The escort stuck to their duty; they fought

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to keep back the crowd ; a series of ugly rushes was made ; here and there the guards were pressed back almost on to the prisoners, and the enemy then got in some well-directed shots. Lucky was the prisoner who had an inside place in the column, for the outsiders bore the brunt of the attack and soon began to bear evidence of the nature of the ammunition.

The crowd consisted chiefly of the very old and the very young. At one period there was one old woman who distinguished herself by the violence of her denunciations and the directness of her aim ; she managed to hit one of the best looking of the young officers three times in quick succession with three well-delivered spits ! Old German women can spit !

The procession had possibly three-quarters of a mile to go before reaching the gates of the fort where they were to be incarcerated, but the journey seemed endless and the din unimaginably hideous. When those big gates finally closed behind them great was the sense of relief. The crowd still continued for a time to bang on the great gates and to sing their hymns of hate, until with a few cheerful parting threats such as " You shall never come out alive," it faded away into the night.

Months later in one of the German comic papers there was a picture depicting the frenzy in London over the hunting of German spies and everything else German. The artist had

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drawn a dachshund, discovered in Hyde Park, being led away to durance vile by a burly policeman. A lane was being made for the enemy dog to pass out at the Park gates. The expression on the dachshund's face was delightfully drawn: it expressed his sovereign contempt. But the touch that appealed to an Englishman's sense of humour most was that the English ladies were all ejecting saliva with accurate aim at poor Graaf!

CHAPTER V. DE MORTUIS.

AT Torgau the prisoners were interned in the Brückenkopf, the bridge-head fort which guarded the bridge over the Elbe opposite to the castle of Hartelfels. There were one or two windows in the upper part of the building from which the castle could be seen. The town of Torgau lay behind the castle. The bridge-head had been one of Napoleon's forts; before the war in peace time it had been occupied by an infantry detachment.

Practically no arrangements had been made for the reception of prisoners, who had at once to set about the organisation of the interior arrangements.

The guard-room by the great gate was occupied by a fairly numerous guard. In the space between the semi-circle of the fort buildings and the ramparts there were some low sheds in use at that time by civilians employed in shell-filling. These buildings were wired off from the rest of the intervening space, which was allotted to the prisoners as an exercising ground.

For a few days, before the arrival in consider-

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able numbers of French prisoners from Maubeuge, a female German cook was employed and the services of a messenger were placed at the disposal of the prisoners of war. This man fetched in supplies from the town and acted as agent to a catering committee which had been hastily formed.

At first there was some difficulty in finding money to pay for the supplies, for not all the prisoners were in possession of cash, and very few had any considerable amount. Those who had none had to borrow for the necessities of life. Speaking personally I had none, but my adjutant possessed a little, and I had to borrow from him to buy a toothbrush and a razor, and occasionally I demanded a pfennig from him to buy a slice of liver-sausage for breakfast.

However, when the French prisoners arrived all difficulties arising from lack of cash were practically at an end, for they had any amount of money in their possession which they carried secreted about their clothing, and they were generous in lending it to the committee to establish the food stores. It was a fact that the whole of the Maubeuge money-chest had been distributed among the French officers of the garrison prior to the capitulation. The money was in French notes and elaborate precautions were taken to conceal it, for it covered the pay of the officers up to, and subsequent to, the fall of the fortress.

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Many weeks elapsed before the names of prisoners of war interned in Germany were communicated to England. Many of the wives at home meanwhile supposed themselves to be widows, for the first casualty lists published in England contained among the 'killed' the names of many officers and men who had in reality been captured. This possibility had been anticipated by the prisoners themselves, for how could it be otherwise in the case of men who had been left behind in the rearguards of the army at Le Cateau with orders to keep up the fighting to the last, whose fate could only become known when the truth was revealed through German sources?

Lists of prisoners had been dropped from the windows of the trains in passing through Belgium, in the hope that some might fall into friendly hands and be reported to relations at home, and other stratagems had been resorted to in order to communicate with England. Perhaps the one most widely reported in the British papers was the communication of the officers of the K.O.Y.L.I. through Messrs Cox & Co., their London agents. It was found that one officer on arrival in Torgau was in possession of a blank cheque of Cox & Co. At a meeting of the prisoner of war officers of the regiment it was decided to make use of this cheque in the following way. The Commandant at Torgau had made it known that any officer who had

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been treated by the German Red Cross would be permitted to show his appreciation of the kindness shown him in hospital by contributing to the funds of the Red Cross Society. There was not much inclination to bless the German Red Cross, but this invitation offered a possible means of communicating the names of survivors, and so a cheque was drawn on Cox & Co. in favour of the German Red Cross for £6 and signed by the Battalion Mess President. On the back of the cheque a note to Messrs Cox & Co. requested the bank to debit the account of each of the officers, whose names were appended, with a small sum, and to inform their next of kin. As a precaution and in order to expedite the cheque, it was crossed "Not negotiable after the 31st October." The thank-offering was accepted, and the cheque was duly cleared and was received by Cox & Co. in London. The bank lost no time in wiring to the nearest relative in each case, begging them to come to their office as there was reason to believe that their relatives were alive in Germany. It occasioned a memorable meeting there next day, and the cheque was framed and hung in the London office, photographs of it appearing in some of the illustrated papers.

The Torgau party received the first confirmation that some of them had been reported killed through a fragment of an English casualty list which came into some prisoner's hands.

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In one of the rooms where a party of four had assembled one afternoon to play bridge (using a pack of French playing-cards that had been found in the looted house at Le Cateau by one of the party, and annexed by him), the fourth man to arrive had just seen the English report. As he sat down to the table he remarked, "It does not often happen that a man sits down to play bridge with three dead men; but you three fellows, I am sorry to have to tell you, are reported 'killed' in the casualty lists at home." It was treble-dummy bridge in very truth. In France, it will be remembered, the dummy at bridge is known as 'le mort,' and here were three reputed 'morts' at one table. The knowledge that one was dead to the world was not stimulating, and in their preoccupation the dummies no doubt made several bad mistakes, but this fact was no valid excuse for the airs that the fourth man gave himself as being the only live man of the four. Time had its revenge in store for him, for when the complete list of casualties was subsequently received it was found that he, too, was a 'mort,' and was of no greater account in the land of the living than any one of his fellows. He, too, had a widow to mourn him in England.

The fact that one was reported 'killed' and would possibly remain so for some months opened up all sorts of problems for some men.

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Men felt the shock that the news must bring to their wives and mothers ; in some cases to fiancées. But there were minor considerations that loomed large in the minds of some harassed prisoners. For instance, there was one man who brooded for days, and evidently was only waiting for some kind-hearted friend to come along and give him an opportunity to open his heart. Such a friend was found, and the poor prisoner then disclosed the subject of his anxiety. He said, " My wife is a most generous woman. I feel certain that there will be a strong demand for my pearl studs, and I would not mind betting that she has given them away." The event proved the accuracy of his forecast, for he learned from his wife's first letter how near she had been to giving them away, and she added that all his clothes had gone to Belgian refugees ! At least the studs were saved.

In another case it was the subject of a general complaint that the German censor's time seemed to be devoted to reading and ' passing ' the letters of one young officer who had become engaged on the eve of starting for France. He must have been a sentimental censor ; probably young and engaged to be married himself, one to whom these letters were absorbing and instructive, an explanation indeed, but not an excuse for his neglect of the senior officers' correspondence.

Each man soon learned to plan out some kind

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of existence for himself. There was the daily scramble for food, the peeling of potatoes at early dawn, the washing of clothes at the pump in the courtyard (for no one had a change of raiment); there were classes for physical and gymnastic exercises started by unselfish enthusiasts; two roll calls a day; walks and talks round the yard with the Allies; there were scraps of news to discuss and deductions to be made from casual expressions used by soldiers of the guard which were overheard. There were duties to perform, games to play, a chapel to be rigged, a camp journal to contribute to, with prizes for the best stories and solutions of problems. Then at a regular hour of the evening there was the fighting of swans, geese and ducks to be observed, as they passed gossiping overhead seeking their night quarters.

The horizon was bounded by the earthworks that surrounded the fort, which was built in the form of an arc. Soldiers' bedsteads with straw mattress and bolster were found in the rooms. It was a blessed day when some fresh straw was brought in and beds could be refilled; the beds were infested with mice, whose families used to squeak audibly at night-time. Many were the families whose careers were cut short when the refilling day came, in spite of the vigorous protests of the mother mice, who bit the hands of the disturbers when plunged into the mattresses to take out the old straw.

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Great stress was laid by the Germans on the fury of the people, and on the fatal consequences that were bound to ensue to any prisoner of war who might be found outside the fortress walls, so that in those first weeks it required a bold man to carry out an escape. Such a man was found in Charles Yate, who was the first to make the attempt.

We had last seen Yate standing on the road at Le Cateau. A fortnight later I chanced to look out of the window of our barrack-room at Torgau early one morning and was astonished and delighted to see him washing himself under the pump. He looked wild and haggard. He had had a thrilling journey across Germany.

Carried off from the battlefield in a private car, he had been passed from one headquarters to another. Twice he had made determined efforts to escape, and had been brought back. Finally, labelled dangerous and closely guarded, he was brought in to Torgau. I had long talks with him. He would listen now to no arguments in favour of patience, but he was bent on making another desperate effort to escape or on dying in the attempt. He had somehow acquired and concealed a pair of workman's trousers and a blue overall. He managed to string together a rope ladder made up of odd bits of equipment, braces and bits of string. He disappeared one night over the parapet and dropped into the ditch, with the assistance of two other officers,

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Roche and Breen. His plan was to get to Switzerland. There were places on the way to the Swiss frontier where he felt certain of finding a temporary asylum, if necessary, for he knew the country from boyhood, and he intended first to head for the home of his old nurse, who was still alive. His wife was living in Switzerland for reasons of health.

Yate learnt the names of all the British officers in Torgau by heart in order to be able to give the tidings of their being alive, should he succeed in getting out of Germany.

Apparently the Germans suspected that a prisoner had made his escape. Next morning on parade the name of the absentee was discovered. Later in the day the senior British officer was informed that Yate was dead. It was first reported that, shot by a sentry, he had run down to the River Elbe and plunged in ; but it was given out later that he had not been hit by the sentry, but that he had disappeared and had walked in the night to the outskirts of Muehlburg, a neighbouring town ; that he had been interrogated in the morning by a party of work-people on their way out to work in the fields ; that these people had attempted to detain him, whereupon he had taken his own life with a razor.

No British prisoner was permitted to attend the funeral, which took place at Martinskirchen, a little village churchyard a short distance from

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Torgau. Even the good chaplain, O'Rourke, who petitioned to be allowed to conduct the service, was told that if he were allowed to appear at the funeral as a priest he would be torn to pieces by the mob.

The following day I received a message summoning me to the presence of the Commandant. The so-called rope ladder was displayed upon a table, and I was asked if I recognised it. I had not seen it before. A workman's blue smock and a pair of trousers were then shown to me, and I was asked to identify them. These also were unknown to me, but I concluded that they must have been worn by Yate, and I saw that they had been immersed in water and wrung out. This rather corroborated in my mind the Elbe story, the only account I had heard up to that time. However, the immersion could equally well have been accounted for by a desire to wash away stains of blood. I was finally asked if I was aware of the nature of any old wounds which Yate showed on his body, and a large cicatrice, which I knew he must have from a wound received in South Africa, was described to me. I felt certain then that he had indeed met his end, but uncertain as to the manner of it. One had to accept the fact that he was dead.

Very few additional prisoners arrived after the first batch, but now and then a single one, discharged from a German hospital, came in.

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Some of them had strange stories to tell of their journeys made across Germany under charge of an escort. The escorts would be changed from time to time when they reached the limit of the area of the territorial commands to which they belonged. Some escorts had been brutal, others tolerant; some had been kindly. One young officer, who had been shot through one leg at Le Cateau, was particularly unfortunate. Deprived of food for days, he began to crave for something to eat. To add to his distress his guards refused to allow him to lie on the seat of the railway carriage: they said that seats were not made for prisoners, and forced him to kneel on the floor. At last, after making a hearty meal themselves at a wayside station, they gave him his first food: a lump of cold fat was chucked along the floor in his direction. Too hungry to be disdainful, he picked it up, scraped the dirt from it and swallowed it eagerly. This was an extreme case of petty tyranny.

All prisoners, whether sound of limb or lame, on their arrival at Torgau had to walk from the railway station to the fort, carrying any personal belongings of which they had become possessed. The prisoners' camp was a haven of rest for these wanderers. There were several British doctors, who had been captured with a field ambulance, to take charge of them and do their best for them.

CHAPTER VI. CAMP ORDERS.

THE policy of the Germans in relation to their prisoners of war was dictated from Berlin. It varied constantly and depended on numerous factors. It was always deliberate and carefully thought out in detail, and more often than not it missed its mark owing to the failure of the Germans to appreciate the psychology of their prisoners. In the early days the policy was directed towards creating an atmosphere of distrust and aversion between the Allies as represented in the prisoners' camps.

As time wore on curious artifices were adopted to embitter the relations between Irish and English; Irishmen were treated with elaborate attention and civility and accorded many privileges. Lavish promises were made to Irishmen in order to induce them to join an Irish brigade to fight against the English. A very few fell into the snare and forswore their allegiance to Britain. Some nominally accepted the terms they were offered in order to enjoy the benefits, with no idea of adding proof of their disloyalty when a crisis was reached and there should come a parting in the ways. The chief agent and

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adviser of these measures was Roger Casement, who was destined to lead the 'brigade' when the numbers justified its formation under that title.

A newspaper called the 'Continental Times' was printed in English and circulated to prisoners, containing all the news that was judged fit for prisoners to read, and many absurd articles written by anglophobe renegades, calculated, so the Germans seemed to think, to inflame the minds of the prisoners against their own Government and to induce suspicion of their Allies. Each prisoner was asked if he would take a copy at a small price, to be deducted from the allowance which was credited to him monthly in accordance with the Rules of War. The camp Commandant was slightly disconcerted in one instance by the answer of one officer who was asked the question; his answer was, "No, Herr Kommandant, I prefer the other German comic papers." "But this is not a comic paper!" "The copy I saw was very comic." The paper fell very flat, and the circulation was so small that it was soon discontinued.

At Torgau the Commandant issued a series of bombastic Orders, which were affixed to the notice-board for all to read. The following is a typical one, literally translated: "Torgau, 18th September 1914. . . . Every day applications from British officers reach me, which are so

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entirely without justification that it is not worth my while to take any notice of them. Officers appear still not to realise the fact that as prisoners of war they have not so much rights as duties. They are not to take up my time with the expression of foolish wishes. If this state of things, which betrays a certain bump-tiousness on the part of British officers, does not cease immediately, I shall take the opportunity to put into each of their rooms a French sub-lieutenant risen from the ranks, and I shall further apply that a proportion of your allies the Russian officers may share your rooms. This Order of mine is to be posted up in the British quarters, and the British Colonel will report to me in German the fact that these instructions have been complied with. (Signed) BRAUN, Captain: Officer in Charge, Prisoners' Depot."

The subtlety of the national distinctions involved appealed to no one but the Germans. No doubt to a German officer the idea of being forced to sleep in the same room with a French officer who had risen from the ranks would have been an outrage, but as nearly every Englishman paired off daily with a Frenchman in his promenades round the exercising ground to their mutual satisfaction and the improvement of their knowledge of each other's language, and as every French officer of necessity had passed through the ranks, the seed of discord fell on stony ground.

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It was no doubt this same train of thought which occurred to the mind of a certain officer later on in the war, to which the following little episode is attributable. Among a batch of newly captured British prisoners at a railway station in the North of France, behind the German lines, was a certain tall and smart young flying officer, whose plane had been brought down by the German fire. The prisoners were standing under escort on the platform: it was the hour when the officers of an adjacent German staff mess had just finished their evening meal. A party of the diners came on to the platform to have a look at the bunch of prisoners: the party was led by a slim young German officer of rank.

Now the British flying man had been before the war an actor on the London stage, and he was standing nearest to the German, who stood with folded arms eyeing him contemptuously at a few paces distance. So the British officer called to his aid the experience of his training for the stage; and he struck his finest attitude, too, denoting supercilious contempt. Thus they stood for a time well matched in height and haughty disdain. It was an unequal match, for the trump cards were with the German player. He turned on his heel and gave an order. The empty train was drawing up to the platform; the messenger selected a compartment, opened the carriage door wide, came back and saluted

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the German officer. The British flying man was invited ceremoniously to enter ; it was a first class compartment. He entered and sat down : the door was temporarily closed and he wondered what the 'game' was, for he felt certain that this extra mark of attention was merely the prelude to some elaborate play. He had not long to wait in suspense. There was the tramp of feet, and a column of African prisoners of the French Legion was being hurried along. The carriage door was thrown open ; the black men were hustled in one after another until the compartment was crammed. Bayonets flashed in the lamplight at the door after the last African had entered, to prevent the Englishman's escape should he attempt it, and the German's revenge was complete. It was now that the flying officer realised that the other exponent of the expression of sovereign disdain was no less a personage than the Crown Prince of Prussia.

Another Order issued by the Commandant at Torgau drew the attention of the prisoners to the fact that the Germans recognised no distinctions of rank amongst prisoners : in short, to a German a prisoner of war was just a prisoner of war. There was "no objection to prisoners practising their distinctions of rank among themselves, but they must bear in mind that all prisoners ranked beneath the lowest German soldier." A British officer who had an oppor-

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tunity, when this order of precedence was repeated to him, of asking where the prisoners of war ranked in relation to the police-hounds that were on guard round the camp, met with a stony silence in answer to his question. It was obvious that the Commandant had received no instructions from Berlin on this point ; in such a case it was obvious, too, that silence would be golden. No trace of humour could enter into the relationship between Commandant and prisoner at this period. Probably pull-legraphy was a science in which the Commandant had never hitherto dabbled.

Copies of Camp Orders were typed and posted on boards in the prisoners' quarters, and were for the most part of the ordinary routine description. The Orders in the camps occupied by the N.C.O.'s and private soldiers were very stringent. Reference will be made later to a divergence of opinion as to what constituted reasonable work to put prisoners to do, and what unreasonable. British prisoners came to the conclusion that work in the mines meant work which had for its object the production of metal for ammunition, and that they could not legally or morally be constrained to work at making ammunition which might be used to kill their own comrades. This point of view was relentlessly opposed by the Germans, and the following copy of an Order, which was actually issued by the Commandant at Hameln

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in Hanover (but unsigned) will illustrate the determination of the Germans to enforce their point of view. The Order was subsequently called in, as it probably exceeded in the baldness of its language the limits prescribed for published Orders. The soldier who typed this Order in the office signed a statement attached to one copy to the effect that they were the Orders typed by him by order of the Commandant :—

COPY.

Orders for those who refuse work.

- i. To induce prisoners who refuse to work, the following methods have been used up to the present :

SMOKING FORBIDDEN, NO BLANKETS, NO STOVE, WITHHOLDING OF PARCELS, EXERCISE, HARD BEDS, NO LIGHT, DIMINUTION OF RATIONS, IMPRISONMENT WITH BREAD AND WATER, STANDING TO 'ATTENTION' IN VIEW OF THE CAMP.

As these measures have not proved strong enough to induce obstinate prisoners to work, it has been found necessary to introduce stronger measures.

If therefore the above measures are proved to be without success the sentries in future will use the Rifle-Butt.

If this is not sufficient they will as a last resource, SHOOT.

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These last measures will not be taken without a special order from an officer or Feldwebel. They will only be used when the other measures have proved to be without success.

Of course every sentry has permission to defend himself when attacked or menaced.

2. N.C.O. prisoners have often volunteered for work, only to find an opportunity to escape, and, this attempt having failed, have again wished to be sent back to their Camp.

In such cases the Officer of the Camp will decide whether the prisoner is able to do work which he is ordered. If he is able he will be obliged to do it.

CHAPTER VII. MEETING THE BEARS.

AFTER the first considerable haul of British prisoners had been made in the days of the retirement from Mons, there were no large captures for many days to come. Various large towns in Germany had been promised their quota of prisoners; some more tangible sign of victory, beyond the black headlines of the evening papers, was required to make a distraction and keep the people from brooding over the drabness of war-time. In order to satisfy their natural cravings for a sight of the 'dogs,' and to keep up the national hatred, the German Government was hard put to it to find the menagerie required.

Belgians, and even Frenchmen, soon lost their novelty in the people's eyes. Territorially speaking, they were such near neighbours that their uniforms, and indeed their characteristics, were quite familiar. The Belgians could mostly speak German, were a reasonable people from the German point of view, who behaved well in captivity and were the right kind to appoint as overseers and examples in the prisoners' camps. Hatred for the French was so old a

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habit that it had developed into an instinct with the German, and after all was not the French a decadent race of undersized but active men, a race with a diminishing population, whose extinction was merely a matter of time and equally to be desired as that of the flea in the home? The hatred for the French was perennial and was accepted as an axiom.

The Bears (our Russian allies) caused a considerable flutter for the moment, and just as in a German village a real bear on a chain brings all the children round it with open eyes to watch its clumsy antics, so a column of Russian prisoners passing from the railway station to some camp gave pleasure to old and young, and caused the inhabitants of a large town to experience a glow of pride in the possession of such fine rugged specimens for their city Zoo.

But the most certain draw was a string of British prisoners. It is not merely national conceit that prompts one to declare it. Mixing with the Allies for years in captivity, in the case of most British prisoners of war, proved destructive to insular conceit and taught one to accept a man as a man, whether raised in the British Empire, in France, Belgium, Russia, Italy, or in Germany.

The attraction of the Briton in the eyes of Germany was a thing apart. The national education for the past forty years or so, through the medium of the schools and the Press, particu-

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larly through the comic illustrated papers, had given the German people a very definite impression of the different varieties of this beast which would be joyfully recognised when the strings of war prisoners began to arrive. Of all the types that the Germans longed to see, the tall raw-boned, sandy-haired Scot, in petticoat and spats, with enormous feet, scalps hanging to his girdle, a knife in his stocking, and with projecting teeth, ranked first and was the most exciting and desirable. The English Tommy was known to be a devil, addicted to 'Sports,' ferocious in hand-to-hand battle, independent of character, essentially a pirate, boastful and contemptuous; while his officer was reputed to be idle and tennis-playing, aristocratic and supercilious, rolling in riches, monocled, insular. It would be glorious to see the creatures humbled, to jeer at them, hiss them, parade them, to make them feel that they were hated.

In a word, these impressions so carefully nursed were prompted by fear. There can be no hatred where fear does not exist. The English have been feared by the Germans as rivals on account of their supremacy at sea, of their aptitude for colonisation, of their intrepidity as a trading community. In order to direct the nation's animus against the Briton, it was the object of the leaders of thought in Germany to teach the people first to fear him.

Conversely it may be noted that the early

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want of success on the part of British leaders in their efforts to make Tommy hate the German soldier was no doubt traceable to the fact that the British Tommy hated nobody because he feared nobody. It was useless to feed Tommy with stories such as that of Germans boiling down the bodies of their dead comrades for their fat, and similar tales. The German use of poison gas was far more effective propaganda ; so was the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Here the Germans themselves designed and inspired the fear, and so created the hatred.

So the people of the large towns in Germany wanted to see British prisoners. Officer prisoners were a useless encumbrance but a necessary evil. At least they might be utilised for shows. Hence towards the end of November 1914 the British officers from Torgau were distributed in parties to other cities. In order to make it appear on their arrival that they were fresh from the Western front, elaborate arrangements were made to make it appear that the new arrivals had come in trains from the west, whereas they had in reality been moved from east to west. They were timed to arrive by lamplight in the late evening, when perhaps the inhabitants would be less discriminating. They could not very well be deprived of the baggage which they had already accumulated in the camp at Torgau, and so it turned out that the new arrivals bore the obvious air of second-hand

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captives. In the case of the party directed to Burg some carried in their hands German-made suitcases, others bundles of blankets, and many bore cooking-pots: one had even packed his possessions in a washing-basket which he carried balanced on his head. There was no other means of transport provided from the station to the camp.

The streets were packed with the usual crowds, the escorting soldiers were busily occupied in hastening the march of the column. The prisoners were disinclined to 'play up' when some of the escort showed off a little before the crowd and prodded the lagging prisoners (the owner of the washing-basket was a bad offender in this respect, for he insisted on stopping occasionally to rest his weary head). The prisoners took the prodding more or less genially; at any rate they did not turn like lions to bite the rifle-butts that prodded them. They did not snarl, they did not wear monocles, they did not show any outward evidence of contempt, they merely disregarded.

The Highlander as an exhibit was, frankly, disappointment. True, he wore his 'petticoat,' but his general aspect was singularly wanting in ferocity: in fact he was neat and wholesome-looking, good-tempered and cheerful. He did not stand inches above his fellows, he was without whiskers and his teeth did not protrude. The sight of him created an unexpected impres-

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sion on the fair sex ; those women who had come to spit, turned away to nurse the feeling that they had been defrauded !

Now it had been carefully put about by the interpreter on the train that a surprise was in store for the new arrivals when they should arrive in camp. It was in fact to be their privilege to meet their Russian comrades. At the same time it was equally carefully hinted that the Russians were fearful 'swine' ; that no words could be found adequately to express their dirty habits, their boorish manners, their quarrelsomeness and their general depravity.

The rooms in camp were already half-filled by Russian officers. After entering the gates of the camp, the first procedure was to eliminate all the prisoners who responded to the question, "Are you an Irishman?" in the affirmative. The remainder were then told off in batches of a dozen or so, and they were conducted to the various huts ; each room contained about two dozen beds. The prisoners filed into the rooms ; they were glad to be leaving the slushy snow through which they had marched outside. It was now about 11 P.M. There was little light in the rooms ; the air inside was stuffy ; there were no windows open. They flung down their bundles and went straight for the windows and threw them open. It was then that a movement in every second bed was noticed. Twelve anxious occupants of the beds had been sitting

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up in expectation of the arrival. They, too, had been carefully primed with stories of the outrageous English whose acquaintance they were about to make. They were not alarmed at the prospect, but they were intrigued. They had been told what to expect about the windows, so they flung themselves back on their pillows, drew the bed-clothes up to cover their mouths and waited for the next development. Their movement drew upon them the attention of the newcomers. In the dim light could be seen a shock of hair over a pair of watching eyes in every alternate bed, but nothing else. The situation appealed irresistibly to the Englishmen, and there followed a burst of laughter in which the Bears promptly joined.

A new situation had been created. The quaintness of the introduction paved the way to friendship. Within a very few minutes animated conversations by means of the French and German languages were being carried on all round the rooms. Friendliness makes an ideal interpreter. Thus did the Lion and the Bear lie down side by side, and in the morning they rose up to eat chaff together ; but the Millennium nevertheless seemed as far away as ever.

CHAPTER VIII. BLUFFED.

TRANSFERS from one camp to another had become rather frequent, and the prisoners from habit were becoming experts in packing rapidly and preparing for a journey. Some prisoners had been recently transferred from Burg to Magdeburg, where there were two camps side by side within view of each other. One was a fortress barrack of the Napoleonic type, being a semicircle of buildings of two stories, backed by a great bank of earth and roofed, too, with soil to a depth of several feet, to make it shell-proof. The passages of communication were behind the rooms in the thickness of the bank, stone-paved, in semi-darkness, with sentries posted at intervals night and day. Across the chord of the semicircle was drawn a high iron-spiked railing with a gateway and guard-house in the centre. This building, named Scharnhorst, looked north and was faced by the second camp, and there was an intervening space of some one hundred and twenty yards. The other camp was known as the Wagonhouse, a three-storied building with the upper stories converted into a place of internment by being

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partitioned off into great rooms each containing on the average twenty-five beds. Its windows looked out towards Scharnhorst: the doors were at the back, opening into passages with barred windows, from which a glimpse of the River Elbe could be gained.

During the winter months the sun could never be seen by the occupants at Scharnhorst. It was a dull hole. It was a matter of some months before the ground between the two camps was taken in and fenced and turned into a recreation ground for the combined camps. There was a further large building of one storey near the Wagonhouse, approachable from either camp.

In each of the prisoners' rooms in Scharnhorst the nationalities were mixed. It was the putting into effect of a new policy. No doubt it was quite an interesting experiment to watch the effect of kennelling, as it were, three Alsations, three poodles, three bulldogs and three huskies in one yard, and giving the biggest of the Alsations a collar as leader of the team. The effect was disappointing. The worst that was seen to happen was that one of the huskies bit another husky, and the other dogs looked on; the Alsations vied in politeness with the poodles, and no dog ate his bone before offering it first to all the other dogs in the yard. In the evening the huskies would sit together and howl in chorus, while the other dogs sat round in admiration.

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One evening it was given out at the Appel (Roll Call) that the whole of the British officers would be moved to another camp the very next morning. Their baggage was to be ready soon after daybreak and placed on wagons which would be waiting in the yard: details for the move were exactly given. There was quite a stir of excitement, and hopes were high that the next camp would be found to be nearer the frontier.

In the morning the wagons duly arrived; the baggage was loaded by the hour directed. Breakfast was eaten in the rooms before starting, good-byes were said and the British party fell in near the gate in column of fours.

The German guard formed up in front and rear, the gates swung open and the column moved out. It was marched to the big one-storied building which was near the Wagonhouse. Here the usual preliminaries were to be carried out, and here they were told they were to be joined by the prisoners from the Wagonhouse. When the latter came in the building was fairly full. It was realised that a search would be made before marching away. There was a long wait. Eventually the guard was reinforced, some men in plain clothes were ushered in, the wagons with the baggage were moved up to the door of the building. A barricade was introduced into the room, with tables to form a temporary Custom House across one

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end. The baggage was then off-loaded by German soldiers and was brought into the building. The prisoners soon tumbled to the fact that the plain clothes men were experts at the job of searching, who had been sent down from Berlin.

The names of the prisoners were called out in order, and two or three advanced to the barrier and were taken through. Their baggage was brought and thoroughly searched in their presence, anything in the shape of money or valuables was removed, placed in envelopes and ticketed with the owners' names. Each officer was then stripped of some of his garments and searched. Finally each was ordered to deliver up his watch, his ring and anything of value he might be wearing. Meanwhile all the other prisoners were aware of what was going on. The first lot protested loudly when it came to the watches and rings. An armourer was sent for to saw through the ring of any officer who protested that his ring would not come off. The time wasted in these protests was in reality of value, for the remaining prisoners now had the 'tip,' and all they wanted was time to take advantage of it. Though the first prisoners to be searched had to part with their sovereigns there was not much gold found upon the remainder, drastic as the search became. When all was over, the day being now far spent, the column was formed up once more ; it was marched straight back

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through the gate into the dismal Scharnhorst yard. The wagons followed and the gates were closed.

It dawned on the unhappy prisoners that they were bluffed indeed. The authorities had cleverly made it sure that the prisoners had taken out with them every article of which they were possessed: they had made an expert search and had deprived the prisoners of everything of value which they had found upon them. They now turned them back into their old quarters again to do their worst.

A few words of comment may well be added.

First, there was method and there was sense in what the Germans had done. Magdeburg is a big city and the camp was almost in the heart of it. Already prisoners were finding escape a possibility, and although there was not much fear that the fugitives would get out of the country, it was advisable to deprive prisoners periodically of money and of everything they possessed which they could turn into German money. With money a prisoner could be certain to find some asylum for a time in a big city such as Magdeburg or Berlin, with time to lay his plans for a further advance after the first hue and cry had subsided. It was a crime for a prisoner to be in possession of German money: all his transactions were effected by credits or tokens.

Secondly, the valuables were carefully kept and methodically labelled, and when some

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months later the U.S.A. Ambassador induced the authorities at Berlin to order that rings and watches should be returned, those articles were all produced: the value of the money in gold or silver was credited to the owners' accounts too, but the coins themselves were not returned.

Thirdly, it may be noted that the building in which the search took place had become a veritable gold mine. From the moment that it was known that a search was in progress, hoping for the best, all possessors of gold coins began to discover places in which to hide them. There were chinks in the frames of all the windows, there were chinks between the boards of the floor; there was a movable engine in the shape of a crane which traversed the length of the room, for it had been a storeroom of some kind; there were interstices in the walls. All these offered excellent hiding-places and received due attention. For some time after the search there was no opportunity of re-entering the building.

However, there came a day not so very long after when this building was designated in camp Orders the camp chapel. Sunday services were instituted for the British. An old German minister, bearded and cassocked, who spoke English well, was introduced to officiate at the Church of England services. Attendance was voluntary, but it was phenomenal. The old

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minister made the most of his opportunities. Tears coursed down his cheeks as, with eyes uplifted, he spoke to the British officers of the sins of their country, of the sins of the nation which was "alone responsible for the war," which was responsible already, morally speaking, for the lives of at least a million of the flower of the Continental nations, which had forced the Germans in their might sadly to undertake the solemn duty of sinking the English merchant ships, including the *Lusitania*, which he said was secretly carrying ammunitions from America to England. In effect he called on the representatives of this heartless, interfering, stuck-up and despicable island of pirates to repent, to repent before it was too late, to go down on their knees and ask for forgiveness.

It could not be said that his hearers were unmoved. There were men present who were possibly touched by his eloquence, and who in their self-abasement were in the mood to repent of anything at the moment. But there were others who made an outward show of being moved, who went down on their knees and bowed their heads and dug furiously between the boards, and one was overheard to say, as he came out, that he had recovered already seven out of his eleven sovereigns! Alas, there were places in the mechanism of the crane, known to be filled with specie, which defied the efforts of the most persistent members of the congregation.

CHAPTER IX. STABLE COMPANIONS.

AFTER the incident of the Great Search the indignation generated by it speedily died down and was obscured in the interest that was created by a reshuffle of the rooms. The prisoners had no say in this matter: as they had to live cheek by jowl with a dozen or so of the Allies in a small and overcrowded barrack-room, any change of rooms and companionship had the charm of novelty. One was happy to seek fresh pastures and to discover the manners and customs of a new lot of stable companions. For instance, it was with no regret that one learned that one would no longer be kept awake after 'Lights Out' by the consumptive Russian captain who prepared to pass each night by coughing and clearing his throat with raucous iteration for an hour or so, and who regularly between four and five o'clock in the morning commenced scraping matches on his match-box to light rank cigarettes to while away the morning hours.

There was a Belgian major to take his place, however, who was the owner of an alarm clock. This he set regularly at 4 A.M., the hour

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at which, for his health's sake as he explained, he ate a rusk. There were two British officers stabled with this Belgian in a room containing a dozen beds. They argued that if he required an alarm to wake him for his rusk, it could not hurt him to sleep on a little later and eat his rusk when he awoke. This did not meet the old Belgian's views. He said that his doctor had always told him that his stomach required food often and at regular intervals; he was very dyspeptic. Indeed he was a strange feeder. The German doctor prescribed white bread and other delicacies for him, and he was actually provided (for he was really ill) with two little white rolls daily. But these he never ate, and he generously handed them over to one of his fellow prisoners in the room at breakfast-time in daily rotation. The rolls were a very real luxury. What the major loved to eat most was a rusk, and he received parcels of rusks from his home in Belgium. He loved also the uncooked indiarubber fish soaked in vinegar, as supplied occasionally in the German ration: the British prisoners always gave him their share of these. He also loved a dainty salad of his own making. This consisted mainly of chopped dandelion stalks (there was a fine supply of dandelions available which grew on a refuse heap). In the absence of oil and vinegar he used to pour on the salad a small portion of the contents of the receiver of the lamp which

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hung in the room : the contents, of course, were paraffin. He had other fancies. But generous as he was with his white rolls, this could not be allowed to absolve him from interference in the matter of the alarum clock : he was most determined about this. It was therefore necessary to resort to strategy, and in his temporary absence from the room on one occasion a simple manipulation ensured silence to the striker.

Daily repetition of this manœuvre soon resulted in counter-strategy on the part of the major, so, when an opportunity again offered, a more serious interference was achieved with the works. It was then quickly discovered that our ally was an amateur clock-maker, for he had down the whole clock after breakfast on the morning after it had failed in its 4 A.M. duty, and he used two saucers, one to contain the wheels and the other to hold the screws. Foolishly he left the saucers on the table when he attended roll call, and when he came to put the clock together again it was deficient of two small screws. He worked at the clock all day, but at night when it was reassembled it was still two screws deficient. Next morning he was looking haggard, and their consciences smote the two officers who were giving their time and energy to foiling him in his attempts to make his clock go again. They replaced the two screws when the clock was once more in bits. They did more than this ; they added

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two little screws to the lot in the saucer. Back the major went to his task to reassemble, and when this was done, behold, he had two surplus screws! Another day was passed in taking down and reassembling, with no greater success. At last its owner discovered that the clock would go without the two surplus screws, and go it did—for one night. After that the clock 'fell' from its shelf and was so damaged that it took a long time to repair. But the man was untiring in his efforts and he had unlimited time on his hands, so that the clock was found to be going again one day, but without its striker, for that had apparently become detached and had vanished in the fall.

The rusk nuisance began again. This time the rusks themselves were the objective of new manœuvres. Each morning's rusk was nightly placed by the invalid in a cupboard near the foot of his bed. There were no locks on the barrack-room cupboards. A rumour had been started that there were rats which visited the room at night. Various proofs of their depredations were discussed. Anon the major's cupboard door acquired a habit of opening during the night, and it became obvious, or at least suspected, that the rats were taking the rusks. Noises of rats were distinctly heard in the cupboard night after night. The harassed man took to sitting up on his bed at night to pounce upon the marauders: this so exhausted him that he

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slept like a top in consequence till daylight. One night he nearly caught a rat in *flagrante delicto* ; he told the room all about it next morning. He had sat on his bed after ' Lights Out ' waiting for the enemy, when suddenly he heard a rustling in the cupboard. He waited some time to put the rat off his guard by letting him stupefy himself with food. He had then most cautiously approached the cupboard with a boot in his hand ; with the other he gently seized the knob of the cupboard door. The rat was prancing about inside ; he waited till it was quiet. Then he suddenly flung open the door. As he did so, with a whirr the rat—a great, fat black one—sprang out past his cheek. He felt the wind of it ; it alighted some feet behind him on the floor. He did not dare to pursue it, for the beds were so thick in the room that he could not follow it. All this was no exaggeration. The major had overlooked the fact that the rat had jumped in the direction of the younger of the Britons' beds ; he also had overlooked the string attached to the rat ; he also had overlooked the smothered sounds of suppressed emotion that proceeded from that direction.

It was felt that the rat trick could be overdone, so it did not perform again for some days. In the meantime the major had displayed another talent. It appeared that he was an inventor. Indeed one already knew by repute of a wonderful pre-war invention of his which

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combined the exercise of bicycling with the delight of skimming over the waters of a lake in a boat. It was not a hydroplane, but a hydro-bike. He had photographs of himself and members of his family riding tandem on a lake at home.

His new invention was a most ingenious rat-trap. It took the form of a kind of wire maze. A rat had an obvious entrance gate; then it traversed passages backwards and forwards, upwards and downwards. After that, in its confusion from having lost its way, it was expected apparently to climb a ladder on to a balanced bridge or platform, to sit on the wrong end, to drop into a hole where it would find a piece of rusk. Its capture depended apparently on someone coming along when it should be busy eating the rusk and pulling up the drawbridge.

This trap was duly set under the inventor's bed. No rat ever entered it, but one morning a small dead mouse was found lying outside the entrance gate. The accepted theory was that in the mouse's efforts to solve the maze puzzle, it had had an attack of brain fever and had died by the way. Be that as it may, the old Belgian was from that date onward permitted by rat and man to eat his rusks in peace.

Relief from the monotony of life in Scharnhorst was sometimes to be found in other ways. During the winter months the ground out-of-

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doors was covered with snow to the depth of several inches. The parades or roll calls were held out-of-doors, and the long waits that sometimes ensued were occasionally filled by impromptu games and exercises to keep up the circulation of the blood. On one occasion a Gordon Highlander appeared with a portion of a loaf of bread under his arm, which he had just purchased at the canteen to supplement his ration. Early in the war extra bread was procurable, though the German people were already being put on rations. Now this Highlander happened to slip on a patch of ice and his bread fell out of his keeping. It had no sooner touched the ground than a brother officer picked it up and passed it to another, and so on till, from occasional falls in the snow, it began to get soaked, while its owner made desperate efforts to recover it. Then someone treated it as a football, and two sides were quickly formed and made a 'bully' with the bread in the centre of the pack. Suddenly with shouts of wrath the German guard rushed in. They were obviously in earnest, and the loaf was rescued by them and taken to the guard-room. The incident apparently was closed, but it had been greatly resented by the guard; and shortly the German papers, copies of which the prisoners were allowed to purchase, produced headlines in large type and descriptions of what was called the "Insult to the People's Bread."

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Letters from enraged people were also published demanding the summary punishment of the offenders. A great deal of capital was made out of the incident. The Commandant had a list put up on the notice-board, and called on all participants in the riot to enter their names for punishment. When it became known that the offenders would be sent to gaol the list of names became surprisingly long, for a period of incarceration in a cell offered an attractive holiday not to be missed. In due course a string of taxis arrived at the gate, and the desperadoes were driven off to the Magdeburg prison for a week or two.

This eagerness for prison is easily explained. In the first place it meant solitary confinement, and the relief experienced in a cell after the incessant noise and discomforts of a crowded barrack-room under the conditions which reigned there, was an inexpressible boon. Then again, in the relations between guards and captives in the mass, the German soldiers showed no discrimination and no relaxation of discipline, but as gaolers dealing with individual prisoners their attitude was often totally different. Many were the indulgences and kindnesses that individual prisoners met with when the eye of authority was not constantly overlooking.

I should myself have gone to prison, for habit as a boy had made it second nature to me to put my head down and shove in when I saw a

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scrum being formed, but instead of finding a haven of rest in a prison cell I contracted a quinsy and was sent to hospital. The hospital was established in a cinema theatre in the town. It was filled with beds, every inch of the floor space, including the stage (for it was built like an ordinary theatre with a deep stage), being utilised. All the patients were prisoners of war—French, Belgians and Russians. I had the good fortune to be allotted a stage box in the dress circle. Never was patient more grateful for a malady. I was practically alone, the only interruptions during the day or night being the one morning visit of the doctor and the subsequent visit of an orderly with my liquid food and gargle. The arrival of my first present of books from home happened to synchronise with the order for my deportation to hospital, and I packed my books in my kit. Among the books was a copy of 'The Broad Highway,' by Jeffery Farnol, and I read it and re-read it, revisiting in imagination those country highways in the South of England which I had always loved.

There were, however, some tragic and many painful episodes to witness. I was much awake, and at night the electric light would frequently be switched on. I would then lean over the parapet of my stage box and watch the dramas that were being staged in the pit.

One night a young Russian, who had arrived during the day, without any warning went

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mad. He slipped out of bed, and in the dim light began to stalk one of the orderlies, taking cover behind the beds as he followed the German down the centre passage of the auditorium. Suddenly, with the tempestuous snarl of a tiger leaping on its prey, the Russian hurled himself on the unsuspecting orderly from behind. The orderly went down like a shot. This was the moment when the lights went up. The orderly was no mean performer when he once got moving, though he had started the fight under such a disadvantage. The Russian was fighting with his teeth, and the object of the orderly, as they rolled on the floor, was to bend the other's head back to keep the teeth from his throat. The beds, with their excited occupants, rather obscured the view, but the movements were so rapid and limbs were moving so freely, the scuffle resembled a catherine wheel with a running accompaniment of tiger-growls and staccato shouts for assistance. Two other orderlies came dashing in; they flung themselves into the fray. One gave a yell and momentarily detached himself from the mêlée, but only for a moment—he had been severely bitten in the shoulder. The whole establishment was now fairly roused. Orderly after orderly came tumbling into the arena. The Russian fought with astonishing power and fury. There were in all six men engaged against him, and he seemed to be attacking all the time. The odds against

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him were bound to tell. It was not long now before he was overpowered ; he was flattened out, strait - waistcoated and morphiaed ; his bellowing gradually subsided into whimpers, his whimpers into bleats. The lights were turned down, and the throbbing, gently moaning peace of a great hospital was resumed.

The fight had been rather exciting for the patients. The orderlies' nerves were slightly jangled by the incidents of the night, so that it was not surprising that some of the patients took to orderly-hunting in their sleep afterwards, as terriers after a long day's hunting in the woods repeat the day's events in sleep before the fire ; nor was it to be wondered at that, at the first note emitted by a sleeping tiger, some orderly dashed for the switch and turned up the light. There were incidents like this, but there was nothing that could have induced one to sit up and watch again that night.

When I had first arrived in the hospital I was left to hang about at a loose end for some little time while waiting for a bed to be allotted to me. I could see only one English-looking face among the patients in the beds around me. It was that of a white-faced, round-eyed, boyish-looking soldier who was leaning propped up against his pillows. He gazed at me so fixedly with a " Hence, horrible shadow, unreal mockery, hence " expression on his face, that I was drawn to move across and talk to him. In spite of

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difficulty in articulation, for my uvula was in the sausage stage, I managed to say, "Are you English?" His reply was, "Boy Trotter, sir; you are my commanding officer. I thought you were dead!" He said this in a stage whisper, as one, being a very young soldier, would address the ghost of one's C.O. He had heard a kindly rumour of the battlefield, which had found its echoes in my home in England, to the effect that an enemy shell had provided me with a rather conspicuous end.

I was the first Englishman that this poor boy (he had come on man's pay at the age of eighteen just before the war) had seen to speak to since he was "blessé," as he put it, "at the battle of Lo Cattoo." He was shot through the legs, and had undergone one operation after another in various hospitals, but never in one where there were others of his countrymen. For six months he had spoken nothing but broken French, which he had picked up from his fellow patients, and he was quite unable to express himself at first without introducing some French words and phrases. A little later on he was a regular visitor in my box, for he could hobble about on crutches, and I taught him to play some Patience games and was able to leave him my Patience cards when the time came for me to return to the Scharnhorst camp.

Before I leave the subject of the hospital, just a word or two about the treatment.

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I believe there were two doctors attached. I only dealt with one. He was terribly overworked, but was patient and devoted to his duty. I heard no word of him that was not in his favour. Of the orderlies one tale will be sufficient. When in due course I was convalescent from my quinsy I was 'run down,' and the doctor recommended me to provide myself with more strengthening food from the hospital canteen than the regular hospital fare. I had no money to buy extras with, and I asked that the Commandant of my camp should be requested on the 'phone to provide me with some credit, for by this time there was a regular system in force for crediting an officer-prisoner's account with one hundred marks each month. The Commandant refused. The message of refusal was conveyed next morning by the doctor, who had two German orderlies with him at the time. Some hours later each of the orderlies came to me in my box and offered to give me money to buy food with. I refused the first offer, being unable to offer any security of repayment, but the second man put down a note for twenty marks and was insistent on my taking it. He said he did not require any repayment, but suggested that after the war I might make some return by applying to his landlady in London and asking her to send him his clothes, which he had left with her when he answered the call of his country to mobilise.

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I wrote my name and home address in his pocket-book, and I made a note of his in my own. I met a French officer of my acquaintance shortly afterwards, who very kindly lent me the money to repay the German orderly before I left the hospital, but I told the latter to let me know in days to come if I could help him to recover his clothes.

I had forgotten the incident. I had repaid my French friend who belonged to the camp at Scharnhorst. A year after the war was ended I received a letter from my friend the orderly. He was suffering from hard times and would very much have liked to recover his pre-war clothing. For some subtle reason connected with the exchange rate the small sum I sent him as a present in lieu of his garments (which I felt sure would not be forthcoming) amounted in his eyes to a fortune, and I received a most grateful letter in return.

CHAPTER X. A DAY IN CAPTIVITY.

THIS account of a single day was written in the Kavalier Scharnhorst at Magdeburg on the 15th March 1915.

We are six in my room—two Belgians, two French, one Russian and I.

This is douche-day. I have been out of bed some time, and have practised some physical exercises in my corner of the room, sewn on a button or two, marked some handkerchiefs, and have searched vainly for the bat which was in the room during the night, when Ducoq, the French orderly, comes in with coffee at 7.45 A.M. He tells me confidentially that the bathroom is open!

Seizing my towels and soap, flinging myself into my greatcoat, I dash into the corridor, down the stairs three at a time, along the ground-floor couloir, turn like a rabbit into a black tunnel, and thirty yards farther on emerge into the ante-chamber of the douche-room. I am not the first, for I am beaten by a short head by M. Henry, the French cuirassier, whose hair is grown exactly to fill his Roman helmet and whose brown beard balances his *chevelure* when his head is uncovered.

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However, I get first go at one of the hot-water showers. The chamber fills rapidly with a pushing, jostling mob. I let a neighbour, whose face is familiar to me, come under my tap. He is dressed in a thin silver chain and locket about the neck; I fail at first to place him among my acquaintances. His "good morning" in Russian reminds me that he is the Russian orderly who included me among the officers he looked after when we were at Burg. He holds out his hand, for my soap apparently. I hand the soap to him. Instantly my back is being soaped and scrubbed in the small, in the place it is difficult to reach. To bring this service to a conclusion, I put out my hand for the soap. My hand is warmly shaken; however, I get my soap again.

Then back to the barrack-room to dress and sit down to coffee and bread and butter, seasoned with a little good liver sausage, which is known to us by the name of Rawdon's spaniel owing to its colour.

After breakfast I make my bed and attire myself in khaki slacks, leather waistcoat, khaki helmet and ankle boots, for I keep my khaki jacket and breeches for full dress. "Like a knight with his harness off," says Lieutenant (Professor) Belfour, kind man! "Just like a coal-heaver," says Colonel Abercrombie, a stickler for uniform. I then go for a brisk walk.

Having some time previously on my way

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back from the bath put my head in through the window of the international ground-floor rabbit warren, where Rawdon and Hibbert sleep till called for, I am joined by these paragons of energy shortly. We circle round our own yard, through the gates, round the between-space, into and round the Wagonhouse yard and back again. Four of these tours go to a mile. Our Allies interest us by their everlasting occupation of greeting one another with affection. After having met and greeted like long-lost brothers in the Scharnhorst yard and made tender inquiries concerning their night's rest, they come upon one another again unexpectedly in the Wagonhouse yard; they rush to shake hands warmly, their faces beaming with pleasure; they part with a heartily expressed hope for good appetite for the next meal!

This is the period of the day when news is circulated. There was a time when one probed to discover the sources of the wonderful pieces of information, but as the result proved to be most disappointingly without foundation as a rule, news is now accepted as 'news' and is—forgotten. One would find, for instance, that Tommy got it in a letter from his aunt, who wrote, "There are twice as many snowdrops in the borders this year!" Obviously (to Tommy) this is a cryptic message and his aunt means to convey the news that the Russians (anyone can see the analogy here) are twice as

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numerous on the frontier now as they were in December. Deduction (the so-called 'news'), "The Russians have been greatly reinforced, and are breaking through all along the frontier."

After the walk, back to my room to do a French exercise and make a pencil sketch before the arrival of my young French friend, de Senville, who comes in at 11 A.M. I make him read and translate some pages of 'The Arrest of Arsène Lupin.' He listens with delight while I do the same with 'Servitude et Grandeur militaires,' by Alfred de Vigny. At a thrilling moment, as always, Ducoq arrives with the déjeuner (twelve-thirty), and the reading is over for the day. Away go the books, soup plates clatter around, from a napkin of packing-sheeting in my cupboard I produce a third of my breakfast bread ration, a packet of 'Honig'—the substitute for 'Bee-honey'—purchased yesterday at the canteen, and a little bit of cheese. Déjeuner is quite an ample meal. When it is over I read till two o'clock, when I take my second walk. I come in from the walk some time before 3 P.M. to-day, because there is something I am working at which takes a lot of hours for clumsy fingers. The task I have set myself is the creation of a set of embroidered crowns and stars to adorn my new 'British warm' which recently arrived from home. The summons to the afternoon roll call comes just when I least expect it and least want it.

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This roll call affords an admirable opportunity for the Allies to greet one another once more. Each one looks as if his whole happiness depends on the answer to the simple question, "I trust the afternoon exercise has improved the sentiments of your stomach?" The roll call finally over, after numerous re-countings, there is a wistfulness in the demeanour of the Allies as they part to return to the barrack-rooms—another day is drawing to its close and we are still here. "À la bonne heure," they murmur as they press hands. Englishmen are much less demonstrative in their greetings and partings. The Russians are the most effusive. The slightest occasion may demand kisses on both cheeks. I was once off my guard and was embraced by a Russian cavalry colonel, one of the nice woolly-bear kind. We know him as 'Cognac-sploshky,' but I do not think that is exactly his real name. The occasion of the embrace was my return from hospital. To-night I stand talking to him for a minute or two before saying 'Good night'; our conversation is carried on in the French language; we are so fluent that a Frenchman standing by thinks we are both conversing in Russian!

And so at 4 P.M. I am ready for tea, that mysterious meal which my Belgian and Russian friends refer to as the 'Five o'clock.' There are three members of our tea club. We purchased a supply of tea in Torgau: we get hot water from

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the canteen on payment. Hibbert, the youngest member, who is *persona grata* with the old cook, fetches the hot water as usual. He wheedles some crusts of bread out of her, or manages to purloin them, and we have some of the honey 'substitute' to apply to them. By hook or by crook we scratch together a small meal, and this is always the cheeriest meal of the day: we have it in a quiet corner of the rabbit warren. Tea is followed by games of chess and 'attack' and a little reading.

At six-thirty I go back to my room for supper; the tea meal has not been sufficient to unfit one for further food.

After supper I read for an hour or so, then go downstairs for Bridge, not very exacting Bridge; sometimes we play with a Frenchman for a fourth, and speak French only. There are no stakes to-day, and each player plays with a book by his side. We play till someone forgets to deal.

At nine-thirty I return once more to my room, and, cleaving my way through the atmosphere, dimly distinguish a card-party of Russians breaking up, the two Frenchmen writing love-letters, and the two tall grave Belgians playing Patience.

With the departure of the last visitor we throw open the windows. I have prevailed on the others to keep the windows open a little at night also, and I sleep as near as possible to the welcome draught.

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At nine-forty the young Frenchmen put on their caps and greatcoats and leave the room to bid their comrades an affectionate 'good night' in the couloir (passage) outside. The stuffiness of the low vaulted chamber is dissipated by the time the Frenchmen come in. They shiver and cough ; I reluctantly raise the window-sashes to their limit for the night.

I turn to my corner, prepare for rest, read my latest home letters once again, and lights are put out at 10 P.M. precisely by the senior Belgian in the room.

CHAPTER XI. LIFE AT MAGDEBURG.

THE Commandant at Magdeburg was the object of universal dislike. The soldiers of the guard, of whom there were some who talked, appeared to hate him intensely and used to say that he was wise to accept a safe billet in a prisoners' camp, for that men of his stamp did not last long at the front. They had no hesitation in saying that if he went to the front he would have difficulty in avoiding the German bullets ! He seemed to be about as human as a ramrod. Every day that he entered Scharnhorst he made a victim of some prisoner or prisoners. His pet grievance was that he was not saluted properly. He expected that any prisoner who happened to be in the yard would halt, turn towards him and salute. As this was a salutation that officers were unaccustomed to render, he had no difficulty in charging some of them daily. No explanation was demanded : no one 'heard' the charges that he preferred against the prisoners, their names were recorded by his N.C.O.'s and the victims were sent to prison. Under his régime all parcels that arrived for prisoners which contained food were opened

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and the contents were confiscated 'in the name of the German Red Cross.'

A British subaltern whose birthday—his twenty-first—was spent at Scharnhorst, had the mortification of seeing, through the parcels office window, a great square box addressed to himself from Buszard's shop in Oxford Street. Everyone knew what Buszard packed in boxes like that; this was obviously a birthday cake of some importance. It stood for a day or two in view of those who passed the window at the issuing time for parcels. Then one day the empty box, the paper it came wrapped in, and the string were solemnly handed over to the owner, and on the box was chalked the usual message: "Contents taken for the German Red Cross." Not only was that subaltern wild, but the other members of his tea party—there were five of them who messed together—shared with him the disappointment which they felt it would cause his parents, who had meant so well, when they learnt the shocking end of the birthday cake intended for the hope of the family.

It happened that the day following this incident the Ambassador of the United States, Mr J. W. Gerard, visited the camp. He insisted on exercising the privilege of his position as Ambassador, and visited every room and questioned the occupants, telling them that their conversations were privileged. The result of

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his representations when he got back to Berlin was quickly seen. Officers' rings and watches which had been confiscated were returned; the embargo on food parcels was taken off; and shortly von G., the unpopular Commandant, disappeared (to the front?), and another German officer of quite a different stamp took his place. But it was too late then to save the birthday cake.

From that date improvements in the camp had been made steadily. Quite an excitement had been caused when it was seen that workmen were enclosing the open space between Scharnhorst and the Wagonhouse with barbed wire fencing. When this was finished in the spring the gates were opened during the day, and the prisoners from the two buildings met and took their exercise together. A tradesman who sold deck-chairs was admitted to camp, and prisoners were allowed to make purchases. Then a hard tennis court was sanctioned, and was constructed by the prisoners. The court was a great asset. The American Embassy again came to the fore, supplying a tennis net and some of the necessary implements.

With the wider space for exercise the possibility of escape was increased, and, in spite of precautions on the part of the gaolers, the wires of the fence were cut from time to time and prisoners got through. A Russian was the first to effect his escape. He made use of his tempo-

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rary freedom to get to Berlin, where, after living a riotous life for a few days, having spent all his cash, he gave himself up to the authorities and was re-arrested, imprisoned for a while and sent back to camp. His example fired others, and this resulted in the curtailment of privileges to the remainder.

There were two great principles of action in dealing with their prisoners which were dear to the German mind. They were Reprisals and Collective Punishment. Reprisals were put into force when it became known to the authorities that countries in which German prisoners were interned were punishing their prisoners in a way that they disapproved of. For instance, it became known that some German officer of high degree was in prison in England for some offence. Thereupon the Germans cast into prison, say, twenty English officers 'of high degree,' provided them with pens and paper and a safe conduct for their letters home, in the hope that the sufferers would represent the terrors of these reprisals in such moving terms in their letters to their people and bring such influence to bear, that the British Government would order the release of the German of high degree. There were amusing sequels in the selection of some of the victims. Inquiries would be started in each camp to discover officers of distinguished lineage, and the Commandant would report that he had, for instance, an

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officer named Grey confined in his camp. The higher authority would jump to the conclusion that this must be some relative of Sir Edward Grey, the British Minister for Foreign Affairs, and 'Grey' would be added to the list. Or that there was an officer named, we will say, William Baron Anderson. Aha, Graaf von Anderson would go to prison! Lord George Sanger would have had short shrift had he been alive and a prisoner of war.

A little later in the war it was learnt that a German non-commissioned officer, captured on the West Coast of Africa, had been found by the British to be in possession of dum-dum bullets. He had been tried by a court-martial and sentenced to death, but the sentence had been commuted to a long term of imprisonment. This became known at Berlin, so two young British officers, who had been captured on their homeward voyage from West Africa by a submarine which had destroyed the vessel on which they were returning as passengers, were selected for reprisal. They were taken from the camp at Clausthal and sent to Spandau, the soldier-criminals' gaol outside Berlin. Here they underwent a severe term, being treated as the German criminals were treated, without partiality, favour or affection. Their incarceration was duly notified to England, but the British Government made no sign. The reprisal was extended, and two British majors joined the

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two prisoners at Spandau. Still no sign. Then the Germans gave one of the majors leave to write to a friend of his, a lieutenant-colonel at Clausthal, on condition that he included in his letter a warning that should the British Government not release the German N.C.O., two lieutenant-colonels, of whom the recipient of the letter would be one, would next be for Spandau. The letter of the major to his friend was a model of circumspection. It included the threat, of course, but it was skilfully worded to show that the writer was in excellent spirits if reduced in weight, and it otherwise treated the matter with levity but with becoming outward show of importance. The lieutenant-colonel was advised to write home and use his influence to save himself and his fellows from the horrors of Spandau. Needless to say he did not mention the subject in his home letters, but he wrote to his friend at Spandau to say he hoped shortly to meet him in gaol and that he would be proud to represent his nation in such good company.

All letters passed through the hands of the officials and of the censors, and the answer was written for their edification ; as a matter of fact, it was never delivered to the Spandau prisoner.

Later the affair was settled by the intervention of a neutral Ambassador. The prisoners from Spandau were woefully thin when they eventually returned to their 'parent' camp.

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One has been brought up to consider, and one still considers, collective punishment a cowardly proceeding. In one's schooldays one possibly remembers occasions when a master punished a whole form of boys for the sins of one of their number, either in an attempt to force the remainder to betray a comrade or by way of treating them as accessories to the fact. Such masters lost the respect of their boys. In these days let us hope that collective punishment is never practised in schools. In Germany the system is an article of the nation's creed. If a 'crime,' such as leaving a cap on the bed (a heinous offence), is committed in a barrack-room, the whole room must suffer. A cap was carelessly left on a bed one day at Burg, and an officer going his rounds came in and discovered it. All the British officers were called upon to fall in, and the German officer, pointing to the offending cap, summed up the situation with these comprehensive words: "All the British officers are Schweinehunds!"

On another occasion when a caricature of a German officer floated out of an upstairs window, fluttered to the ground by the side of a sentry, was picked up by him with his face red to bursting from the shock of seeing it, was carried to the Kommandantur, where incidentally it almost produced a fit of apoplexy, the outcome was that on the next morning's Appel the whole of the prisoners were informed that they were confined

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to the building until the name of the caricaturist was given up. For a week the prisoners at Claus-thal were deprived of all recreation out-of-doors on account of a crime of this nature ; the others would not allow the young offender to give in his name, as a protest against the system of collective punishment. The artist's feelings, however, became too much for him, and he gave himself away and went to cells.

Every escape and attempt to escape entailed collective punishment for those who were left behind. As this meant loss of recreation for a fortnight, as a rule, escapes that led nowhere were naturally regarded as rather selfish amusements. One took a pride in the very gallant attempts that were frequently made later on by active and romantic young escapers who tried to reach the frontiers, but it was more than annoying to have to suffer for someone or other of the Allies who was known to have gone to have a few hectic days of adventure in the lower parts of the city of Berlin.

There was one famous under-officer who used to march into the camp at Scharnhorst every second day in command of the guard. He was a regular procession in himself, outstanding even among fat Germans. One used to time him to see how long he took to pass a given point. When he was standing in the doorway of the guard-room one could see that he was there, long before he could have been aware

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that he was being approached. When his guard was dismissed an orderly would come out and rescue him from his equipment. He would then stand in the yard smoking a huge cigar. He always did a lot of standing about: guard-room benches are narrow, awkward things and very easy to miss if you cannot see where you are going to sit. One morning he was standing in his usual attitude, quite well balanced but wearing a rather preoccupied air, when his cigar happened to roll gently out of his mouth. The cigar tripped lightly over his lower chins, took a pull when it landed on his upper chest, then started rolling for the edge. The poor man made ineffective dabs at it with his hands, but it was a small thing for such large hands to arrest when moving at speed, and the cigar reached the edge where the equipment belt was wont to press, and toppled over on to the ground. Here indeed was an awkward position. By taking a few paces to his left, the commander of the guard could, and did, view the wretched thing on the ground. Men like that, of course, cannot stoop. If he had attempted to stoop he might have lost his balance: the nearest sentry was round the corner. Being a man of resource, the commander blew his whistle. Round came the sentry. The commander was by this time blue with agitation and inarticulate. The sentry tumbled to the cause of the tragedy which was threatening, and came to the rescue just in

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time. Grounding his rifle he picked up the cigar, wiped it on his sleeve and stuck it in the commander's mouth. A grateful grunt, and life rolled on as before.

Here tragedy was averted ; but life in Scharnhorst was not always without its tragic side. Here is an instance.

A young Russian quarrelled with a brother officer. The occupants of the rooms in which these two hot-tempered compatriots lived understood that the first Russian insulted the other by some reference to the latter's wife, which he resented. Evidently they had been acquaintances before the war. This led to daily scenes, for each morning at breakfast-time one of them would visit the other's rooms and hurl some insult at his brother officer's head ; the other would hurl some solid thing such as a fork or a spoon at the insulter, who would then withdraw. The daily skirmish was becoming almost monotonous, when one day, to the horror of the spectators, the married one came in, walked up to the other at the breakfast-table and plunged a knife into his back. The Russian died on the spot. The murderer was arrested and tried by court-martial. He was sentenced to six months' imprisonment on a charge equivalent to the English crime known as "Creating a disturbance in the barrack-room." No doubt the German authorities considered it advisable to leave the graver issue to be dealt with after the war by

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Russian judges. The prisoner got off lightly, seeing that the greater portion of his sentence was remitted, and he returned to camp to live again among his former messmates. That he was a truculent and dangerous neighbour may be gathered from the fact that on his return he made it known to his fellows that if anyone of them failed to treat him with respect and did not wish him 'Good day' in the mornings, he would incur the fate of the dead man. On Easter Day Russians hail one another with the greeting, "Christ is risen," followed by a kiss on either cheek. One wondered how many of the Russians would have consented to be kissed at the point of the dagger, or if any one of them would refuse next Easter Day. However, the dilemma was avoided, for the man was removed to another camp, much to the relief (I think) of all his brethren.

CHAPTER XII. THE QUEEN MARIES.

NOT very long after Mr Gerard had paid his visit to Magdeburg, the result of his representations at Berlin began to be noticed: some important winter gifts arrived in camp and were delivered to the prisoners. Among them was a consignment of boots, the gracious gift of Her Majesty, Queen Mary, which was very welcome and deeply appreciated. A committee was formed to distribute such gifts.

The boots were of varying sizes, and it was not difficult to find homes for the majority of them among the applicants with medium-sized feet. There was one pair of boots that had been included, possibly as an afterthought: it was several sizes larger than any of the other pairs.

Now, there was an officer among the British prisoners who used to devote most of his time to translating the news in the German papers into English for the delectation of those of his brother officers who were unable to read it for themselves in German. He gave readings daily to those who were interested. This was a public-spirited thing to do, and the news was all the more palatable since the reader happened to be

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the most consistent optimist in camp. He never allowed that any of the things he read were the absolute truth. He could always read between the lines, and he had a happy knack of explaining away every item published in the German press which the Germans claimed as being favourable to their own arms.

This officer, immersed in his unselfish occupation, had no thought of making application for a pair of the boots, of which in reality he stood badly in need at the moment. Possibly, being a man of wide understanding and discernment, he thought it very unlikely that he could be fitted. The boots committee had hitherto quite overlooked him in their endeavours to find a worthy recipient for the 'Queen Maries'—the name by which the largest pair of boots had become known throughout the camp. One after another, officers who thought they had abnormally large feet had applied to the committee, had tried on the Queen Maries, but had failed to justify their claims.

It was a parallel to the famous case of Cinderella. The royal gift was only to be bestowed where it could be worn with ease and elegance. It was useless for candidates to wear three pairs of socks, to stuff the boots surreptitiously with cotton-wool, or, in fact, to adopt any of the tricks which vanity or cupidity might lead them to practise, in order to swell the importance of their feet. The committee were not to be duped,

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and they held to the task to which they had been appointed.

Not to prolong the story unduly, one evening (so it was surmised) it chanced that in one of the darkest passages of the fortress-prison of Scharnhorst, the president of the committee unexpectedly encountered the camp optimist; the camp optimist quite accidentally trod on the other's toes. The tread was an eye-opener to the president of the committee, and his perceptions were quickened to an unusual degree. He was reported to have loudly exclaimed things at the time of which he was not previously understood to have had any knowledge. Be that as it may, a deputation waited upon the camp optimist next morning immediately after breakfast, bearing the Queen Maries in a box. The optimist was asked if he was in need of a new pair of boots. It was the work of a moment to sit down on the edge of his bed and take off his well-worn crushers. A small crowd of idle prisoners had gathered round, just as a crowd will collect in a London street to see a foreign prince cross the footpath from his waiting car to enter the shop of a tobacconist. The optimist slipped his stockinged feet into the royal buskins (the occasion calls for a word more dignified than boots): they fitted him like gloves!

The optimist was immediately proclaimed owner of the Queen Maries, and a generous cheer was raised by the onlookers.

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I happened to be sharing a room with the optimist in Clausthal two and a half years later, so that I am in a position to declare that those boots proved to be a colossal success and that they had a record of fine service. When I knew them at this later period they had outlived their usefulness as ordinary outdoor boots. They were now cut down about the ankles to the shape of indoor shoes, and they served as bedroom slippers. Often have I fallen over them in the dark as they lay across the floor, for their owner was a careless man in such matters.

Whether the shoes are in existence now I cannot say. Apart from their possible value in the museum of the R.U.S.I., there are purposes of a more profitable nature that they might have been put to. For instance, filled with lead they might make admirable door-weights—elephants' feet are sometimes put to kindred uses in the homes of ex-African magistrates and big game hunters. Or again, as burglar-shockers they might prove valuable; placed at night beneath a curtain in the hall of the owner in such a manner as to protrude below its bottom line, those boots might well create the illusion of some gigantic member of the metropolitan police force in hiding behind its folds.

Truth to tell, I have not tried to verify the existence of the Queen Maries at the present day. I prefer that their fate should remain

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wrapped in uncertainty. I cannot believe that they can have been lost ; they may have been stolen in England after the war.

I know of no boots that ever created quite the sensation that the Queen Maries created—if they stepped upon one's toes.

CHAPTER XIII. PROPAGANDA, POISON AND PIRACY.

WHEN serving with one of the moving columns during a later period of the South African War (*i.e.*, in 1901-1902), it was our fortune to show hospitality on more than one occasion to a young German attaché, a lieutenant of cavalry, who was an accredited representative of his country's army. He was roving from column to column and watching our methods and tactics. He was of a convivial nature, and was everywhere kindly received. I think one of his chief interesting traits in the eyes of some of us was his manner of warming to the hospitality of his hosts. His geniality expanded with his capacity for swallowing liquor; he never became quarrelsome or gross, but he waxed more and more benign. The height of his geniality was reached when he rose to his feet with his glass in his hand and called upon his new friends to drink with him to "The Day." He gave it as his opinion that in ten years' time or so the great day would arrive when he and his companions of the German cavalry would be riding gloriously to meet his British hosts in the shock of battle. On these

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occasions he beamed on his prospective foes, his eyes shining with the crusader's ecstasy. His ardour was infectious. It gave his hearers an appreciation of the spirit which animated his military compatriots.

This attitude of mind gave point to the attitude of his august master, the Kaiser, who had electrified the world by sending his famous message to Paul Kruger. It also helped to open the eyes of British officers to the intention underlying the campaign of propaganda which was at the time just beginning to be realised and understood.

We who were in South Africa knew little of the campaign that was being waged against Britain in the Continental press, but I remember that the commander of one of the columns that I was serving with was a student of international questions besides being a master of many languages. It was his habit, immediately after the occupation of any Boer town, to examine the school-books in the schools, and he drew our attention to the fact that the Boer children, whose primers were printed in Germany, were consistently taught to hate British children, by references to British girls and boys in terms calculated to rouse their scorn and contempt. How many years this teaching had been going on, it was not possible to say, but it has always remained in my mind as a notable example of poisonous propaganda.

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To the present day there are many of our Dutch friends living in Holland, whose education at that period included anti-British propaganda, who believe that the British in the Boer War maliciously herded the Boer families into concentration camps and then neglected them, allowing the children to die like flies with a most callous disregard for their health and happiness.

Two or three years after the Boer War I found myself on one occasion in a cosmopolitan assembly one Christmas night in a hotel in Sicily. There was a gentle-looking Dutch lady present, who suddenly rose from her chair and astonished the guests by stating in deliberate tones that she declined to sit in the same room with "a murderer of Boer women and children," pointing the finger of scorn at myself.

The lady had been brought to this pitch of indignation, no doubt, by reading the venomous propaganda of the period in the Continental papers.

In 1914, when the torch was put to the bonfires which had been so carefully prepared for so many years, the campaign of vilification became intensified. The calculated hatred was fed by a constant stream of lies and perversions of the truth, like blazing pitch; the prisoners of war who first arrived in Germany came under its scorching influence.

The British troops went into the war with no settled feelings of hatred for Germany or the

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Germans. It was only when the campaign of counter-propaganda developed in the British-controlled press that a manufactured hatred took the place of secure indifference that had marked the attitude of most British minds before. Amongst the prisoners of war indignation at the accusations levelled against us in the German press was followed by astonishment at some of the lies, half-truths and distortions of the truth that we discovered our countrymen and women were being taught to swallow. Some of the prisoners became so worked up by reading some of the accusations against Britain in the German papers that they requested leave to write corrections for publication, innocently thinking that the readers were being unintentionally misled ; but, of course, they were severely snubbed.

Propaganda of the sort referred to is hideous and revolting. Let us hope the influence of the League of Nations may in time become so powerful that the intelligent world may be saved in future years from the possibility of a repetition of the use of this foul international weapon of offence ! Perhaps some day there may be set up in the Permanent Court of International Justice a court to deal with cases of international libel, which will have powers to deal effectively with political liars and slanderers in peace-time.

Those prisoners whose fate it was to be behind the scenes in Germany for the duration of the war, were in a position to note the gradual

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change of sentiment and demeanour which came over the German people. For instance, there was a German woman connected with the canteen in the Clausthal prison who in the early days looked buxom and well fed. She had been a nursery governess in England some time before the war. This woman was one of the bitterest of the enemies of the British. When a British officer among other nationals approached the counter behind which she was serving, her brows were knit and her eyes were contracted with hatred. One felt that she might forget her self-control and spit. By degrees, as time wore on, this attitude wore off, and long before the war drew to its close she had become not only greatly reduced in size from the starvation diet but devoid of all her ancient fire. She used plaintively to say that she no longer knew whom or what to believe.

When poison gas was introduced in the Ypres Salient in the spring of 1915 as an implement of death, the German papers were full of execration of the British, for the High Command forestalled the inevitable outcry in the world by publishing an accusation against the British as being the initiators of this new and diabolical method of destroying life. It served its purpose as propaganda to keep at white-heat the fury of hatred for a time ; it was only when papers from neutral countries leaked through, that the real originators of the device became suspected.

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As to the charges of piracy on the high seas which were levelled by each side in turn against the other, of course prisoners were in the dark as to their truth. The sinking of the *Lusitania* was boomed in Germany as a glorious feat of arms; the Government had medals struck to commemorate the event; flags were flown from every masthead throughout the country, and eloquent sermons were preached in its praise.

It was difficult to know what was happening and what were the true circumstances which raised this seemingly depraved act to the level of commendable piracy. We English have traditionally been in the habit of treating a pirate in our minds with a certain degree of leniency (though, of course, hanging him). This sentimental weakness in his favour is due to our hereditary instincts as an island community, and it dates from Queen Elizabeth's time, when we had to learn the ways of the sea or live abject lives at the mercy of Spain or the Hanseatic League. The Germans, too, may have had like traditions, dating from their descent from the Hanseatic leaguers. As children they may have read stories of pirates and have revelled in them just as we have done. Under no possible circumstances of deception or of fear, however, could one have pictured our own people claiming merit for such acts as the sinking of merchantmen 'without trace,' or the destruction of hospital ships. The Germans were faced with

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the prospect of slow starvation, and they already beheld their children growing boneless and emaciated. For them there were no half-measures, no enervating sentiments of chivalry or pity. They were from the first out to conquer and destroy; they believed the shortest and the most ruthless path to be the surest and, in the end, the most economic, so they shut their eyes and went straight ahead. It was not, I imagine, that the people were more ruthless by nature, for individual Germans are as kindly as the individuals of other Teutonic nations, but that the nation had been dominated during the past forty years or so by the professors of a school of self-centred patriotism tinged with the philosophy of such madmen as Nietzsche, and the logical outcome was to be traced in its every action.

The denunciations which followed the sinking of the *Lusitania* were replied to by Germany, who cast in the teeth of the British Government the action of the *Baralong*, a disguised merchantman. It was alleged that a German submarine, deceived by the harmless appearance of the little vessel, approached her unsuspectingly and was sunk by the sudden fire from her camouflaged battery; that some members of the crew of the submarine, who did not go down with her, were then shot while swimming on the water.

It would be well for the comity of nations if

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a universal interdict could be placed on some of the hoary platitudes which have so constantly been quoted in vindication of the use of lying propaganda, poison and piracy. I refer to old stagers such as "All is fair in love and war," "Necessity has no laws" and "The end justifies the means." During the war, as was perhaps inevitable, all questions of right or wrong were postponed, to be dealt with at the end of the war. Germans, for two-thirds of the war period at any rate, could not conceive of any end to the war other than as victors; they must be the arbiters of right and wrong; and they would in the end be justified.

Possibly reliance was placed on the same arguments in the thoughts of her enemies?

CHAPTER XIV. CLAUSTHAL.

IN the summer of 1915, in the early days of August, the prisoners of war camp in Clausthal was opened to take in drafts from other camps in Germany which were becoming too congested. Clausthal is a neat little town on a tableland in the Harz Mountains, reached after considerable windings and wanderings of panting trains up and up through beautiful valleys, and is, as the name implies, the home of Santa Claus, or at any rate, even if the original Santa Claus (Saint Nicholas) was not in any way connected with Clausthal in the Harz Mountains, it is easy to imagine a connection between the patron saint of Russia, who is also patron saint of children, and this little town in its Christmas-card setting.

In the absence of a handbook to explain the mythology of the district, one just jumped to the conclusion that here was the place of origin of the Christmas card, for the land is a land of Christmas trees with (in winter) branches weighed down with jackets of snow : in the sunlight the trees sparkled as if hung with tinsel, or better, with diamonds : there were the cold sapphire

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skies of the daytime, the blood-red sunsets and glorious starry nights ; the forests, too, are the kind of forests that at Christmas time must teem with the wood people, the fairies, the gnomes, the elves and the sprites.

The prisoners, who came in August, had travelled by train across the plains of Hanover when the skies were hot and cloudless overhead; had seen and duly noted the standing crops to be meagre and stunted, parched by the drought; had experienced an ever-increasing sense of relief and expectation as the train slowly rose from the plains to the upland country, with its cooler air and its mountain streams; had left the train at the little station almost unobserved by sightseers, and had marched by twilight up a well-kept road bordered with trees to the iron gates leading into the grounds of a mushroom hotel built of wood. They found the hotel to be beautifully situated, overlooking a series of little lakes formed by dams which hold back the waters of a mountain stream. They were soon to learn that the water of the lakes is used as power for the mines with which this country is honeycombed.

Here was a change from the fortress prisons in the big cities from which the prisoners had come. Here were good hotel beds to sleep on, a fine large hall to take meals in, villa-like grounds to walk in, a beer-garden at the back to sit out in, beneath the shade of little maples

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and lime trees. But for the high wire fence surrounding the rather restricted garden, which was boarded high on the side of the road, the prisoners might with a stretch of fancy have imagined themselves to be welcome guests in a typical tourists' caravanserai.

On the morning after their arrival the prisoners were assembled on parade outside the building to meet and to be addressed by the camp Commandant. As soldiers the impression that this Commandant made on his hearers could not have been otherwise than favourable. His speech, made in German, was translated by an interpreter. He was a little man, a colonel of the local regiment, recovering from wounds received on the Western front; a dapper, keen little man, full of patriotic thoughts and devoted to his country's cause. He had instincts of generosity which were not obliterated by Prussian militarism: he spoke to the prisoners as a man addressing men, outlined the rules that were to govern the camp, spoke of his own hope to return to the front "to the sound of the rifles and the guns," where it was his dearest wish to meet his end in the fight for his fatherland. He finished by calling on all the prisoners to stand with him in silence for two minutes to show their mutual respect for their dead.

Though the speech may have seemed a little theatrical, the speaker had the air of sincerity,

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and in his subsequent dealings with the prisoners in his charge he preserved the same dignified and detached demeanour. His heart was unmistakably away with his fellow-countrymen on the Western front. His recovery was no doubt accelerated by his will-power, for a period of only a few weeks elapsed before he joyfully received his orders to return to his fighting unit, his departure being the occasion for another little speech. His stay at the front, however, was short-lived for, according to the canteen gossip, he was back again within a month, desperately wounded, and this time not to recover.

Germany is a wonderfully orderly country, and Clausthal showed itself to be no exception to the rule. Men and women are very orderly ; the birds are very orderly ; deer, cattle, trees, children even, appear orderly. After this rather sweeping and comprehensive expression of commendation I will endeavour with a few examples to justify it and to illustrate its meaning.

There are mines in and around Clausthal for the extraction of many kinds of minerals, and there were Germans working in them. On certain days in the week parties of prisoners of war were marched to the neighbouring pithead to have a hot bath in the miners' baths. These baths were models of cleanliness and efficiency. Beyond a spacious drying-room through which the prisoners passed, was a dressing-hall where hung all the walking-out clothes of the miners

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who were working in the pits. Each miner changed in the hall ; he had his own chain with hook attached which could be locked to a fastening on the wall, to which he tied his day clothes, and from which he detached his working kit ; he then wound his bundle up to the ceiling of the room before leaving the building to go to work. At the end of his shift he changed again, had a hot bath in one of the many shower bathrooms off the hall, came back and put on his walking-out clothes, slinging the working kit up to the ceiling again by the hook on the end of his own private cord. He then fastened his lock and went forth into the world a cleaner and better - dressed individual than the average pedestrian. The prisoners of war, introduced for the first time to these pithead baths, were interested to observe that many of the bundles of walking-out clothes suspended from the dressing-hall ceiling contained such articles as spats and suchlike elegancies of attire, and they guessed that their owners paid no little attention to their personal appearance. Obviously the German miner would not dream of approaching his home with unwashed face and foul clothing.

That the women are orderly one had only to see them to realise, and the prisoners saw something of their discipline when German high officials came to the camp and paraded the canteen-helpers. As tram conductors, railway guards, and in other official positions, they

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appeared to be efficient, their turn-out was faultless and their control of the situation was quite unchallenged.

The birds were orderly by force of habit and discipline. During the walks to the baths it was noticed that many trees were fitted with bird-boxes systematically. The birds in Germany would appear to be forbidden to sit on branches of trees where they are not wanted ; they must make their nests and lay their eggs in the boxes provided for the purpose ; they are not encouraged to sing in the wild state ; if they have decent voices they must submit to life in an aviary, and to a regular and systematic training to develop their voices. Canaries and bullfinches, which one had imagined to be indigenous to the Harz Mountains, are imported in numbers to be trained in the mountain schools. In this way there is less likelihood of their piping the wrong tunes or whistling vulgar calls. One never met with canaries or bullfinches in the wild state ; there were comparatively few free birds but occasional hawks and bustards, and in the winter months, duck, teal, geese and swans made their appearance, all very punctual and orderly in their habits.

The Harz Mountains are clothed in pine-woods, spruces and larches in great numbers, and many other varieties. The trees in the forests grow in regular lines at regular distances between trees, and they are cultivated scienti-

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fically. The forests are stocked with deer ; the deer roam just as far as their boundary fences permit them, which is not far. The deer have different quarters assigned to them at the various seasons of the year : they go about their business in a sedate and orderly manner.

The cows of the Clausthal community lived in their stalls at the homes of their owners in the town. In the morning after milking time the doors of the sheds would be opened for them and the cows would collect in the street to follow a cow-keeper into the country, where they would graze during the day on the piece of ground allotted to them, returning at evening to be milked again, in a sober well-disciplined manner, each breaking off from the herd as she came opposite to her own home and quietly finding her way into her own stall.

Of the children the prisoners saw something when they were permitted later on to take walks through the woods. Little children would join the column of prisoners, walking by their side, and soon learning to expect sweets and chocolate derived from the prisoners' parcels from England. They showed no fear of the prisoners and quickly adopted the habit in some cases of linking their arms in those of the prisoners and of accompanying them, until ordered away by the guards.

The spring in the Harz Mountains is of very short duration : the winter is very severe and

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the snow is on the ground from October to May. With the sudden change to summer conditions the grasses and the flowers spring into life. The atmosphere is clear and delightful, the colouring brilliant. The lake that lay below the hotel prison was known as the lake of the Peacock, and the hotel took its name from the lake. It was said that the name was given to the lake on account of its shape, which resembled that of the bird, but it may well have been given for the colouring it assumed at certain seasons of the year. No lake ever existed which changed its garb so completely with the varying seasons. A weed which grew green along the margin of its waters appeared red when in bloom, softening later to pink, and later again to brown. The waters of the lake reflected the wonderful skies of this upland atmosphere. Often there were sea-green skies at even with luminous bolsters of fiery cloud which drifted across the mountains as the sun went down. Away beyond the lake, beyond the pinewoods, could be seen the Brocken, the mountain of legend and mystery. To watch the evening lights in the belt of pine-trees rising from the lake was fascinating to anyone to whom colour appealed. As the setting sun caught the stems of the pines they glowed blood-red until the evening shadows enveloped them when the red lights lingered in the tree-tops, with the sky a blaze of colour behind.

The change to autumn was equally rapid,

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but the maples lingered over their change of leaf, some turning scarlet, others preferring shades of purple. With an eye to colour contrasts, the Germans plant a single row of maples on either side of the roads that run through the forest, so that in the autumn when walking down one of these roads, against the deep sombre greens and browns of the background of pinewoods, one comes upon flaming patches of colour produced by the young maples.

Winter brings a complete change of dress ; the lakes are frozen over, the pines hang heavy with snow ; there are periods of mist, periods of crisp fine weather when the sun has little warmth but puts delicate colouring even into the snow, and periods of storm.

Such was the countryside. Lovely enough if one had a mind to be attracted by it, but soon growing tiresome in the eyes of most prisoners. Does not Milton say in 'Paradise Lost' :

" The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven " ?

In these scenes of brilliant transformation, behind the wires of the fence that caged them, men's minds were slowly but surely deteriorating. From hope deferred they went to hope destroyed in many cases ; ambitions slowly dying, humour growing bitter, pride tottering from its frequent

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falls. There were times when the most optimistic felt the terrors that contagion bred. For the Russians, for instance, all the worst horrors which they dreaded for their country were destined to materialise: no optimism could save the most courageous Russian from realisation of the depths of infamy and despair into which his country was being plunged. To-day there can be few of them alive who were in the German prisons; such few as are alive have passed through hell. The minds of not a few were giving way even in the prison days: luckier they than some who lived to be repatriated.

No prisoners who had to pass through years of life in Germany can have come through them unchanged. Possibly British prisoners suffered less change than men of other nationalities. This, if it is so, is due to their national temperament. However, changes of mind and character due to the war period were not peculiar to prisoners of war alone. The majority of prisoners were to live to return to their homes. The younger ones had still their lives before them with experience to sober them; others, not young enough to take up their lives again from the point where they were smashed, had to plan fresh careers and infuse just so much purpose and reality into them as each was capable of producing.

Before the war, so one was told, there was a little local club in Claustal where the well-to-do

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business and professional men were wont to congregate. The dentist, to whose tender mercies the prisoners from time to time committed themselves, was reported to have said to one of his visitors that of the club members who were there before the war four only were living then. With reflections of this nature running through the dentist's head, what use to hope for painless dentistry ?

CHAPTER XV. BELGIANS.

It has been mentioned before that an order of precedence was maintained in all camps, and that prisoners fell in on parade in this order. Belgians occupied the right of the line, the place of honour; then came the French, with the Russians next on their left; lastly, the British on the extreme left. Later, when a sprinkling of Italians were added, after Italy came in to the war, these stood between the Belgians and the French.

This order was partly due to the policy of the Germans to placate the Belgians and draw the line of contrast sharply between them and the other Allies, and partly, no doubt, to the Belgian officers' orderly behaviour and their punctilious attention to such matters as their dress. They always wore uniform correctly; they showed respect for authority, and, as representatives of their nation, were grave and law-abiding.

The Belgian officers were well-informed, studious men, most of the prisoners being business or professional men. There must have been few of them who, after the war, were not fully equipped to resume some profession in civil life.

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They were profoundly depressed and prone to be moved to tears even on the mention of Brussels, Antwerp or Liège.

Their attitude towards life in the early days of captivity is readily accounted for when it is remembered that, owing to the geographical position of their country, they had to bear the brunt single-handed in the first onslaught of the war. They bore it nobly.

Their homes had been devastated, their country was in the enemy's hands, they feared the Germans, they saw no hope for their nation in the future but as vassals of Germany.

To these thoughtful home-loving men, with their artistic aspirations and strong patriotic sensibility, European history, in which their forbears had borne so dogged and strenuous a part, was an open book. Also they had read much of, and were steeped in, the pre-war continental propaganda literature. They believed that no earthly power could stem the German tide, and they saw that any illusions which had been based on the theories of such writers as Norman Angell were doomed to be shattered. It was all very well for the British to talk grandly about sticking to their obligations in regard to Belgium, but, so they argued, it would have been more to the purpose if Great Britain had maintained an efficient army always, large enough to have influenced Germany and deterred her from overrunning their country,

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and so have saved them from the danger and horrors of invasion. The knowledge that Great Britain would definitely intervene if Belgian territory were violated would have been a most potent factor in the councils of the countries who were anticipating war.

As time went on, this soreness became obliterated ; at any rate it faded. Gradually the Belgian prisoners learnt what the people in England were doing for their kith and kin, and the tide of their indignation turned in favour of their British allies. Belgians had always been full of pride, a just pride, in their cities, in their democratic institutions and national achievements. As the war wore on they acquired a new pride in their fellow countrymen and their sons, especially when they received news of that gallant remnant of their army occupying their portion of the line under their admirable King.

As a whole, the Belgians took little active part in the physical recreations of the camps. Their happiness was discovered rather in literature and conversation. They loved their coffee-parties after the mid-day meal. Few of them bothered their heads about possible escapes from Germany, for the simple reason that they had no country to which to escape. While the French and British were everlastingly courting the prison cells, no one dreamed of seeing a Belgian being led away to durance vile for any breach of discipline or disobedience of camp orders.

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The first lectures on military subjects were given to their fellow prisoners by Belgians who had been instructors in their army. The example thus set was a good one, and it was followed very generally by the other nationalities.

A certain number of Belgian soldier orderlies were present in the camps ; they were of a good class, intelligent and helpful.

But if the Belgians as a rule, like the ' Belgian hare,' were models of correct behaviour, there were a few notable exceptions. In each camp there appeared at least one man of that nationality who was an object of suspicion to his fellows. Belgium is so small a country that the majority of the prisoners were known to some other members of their community, their fellow townsmen or their regimental comrades. When a Belgian prisoner appeared who was unknown to the others, there was at once created a suspicion that he was a pro-German and a spy. He was carefully watched and his movements and conversations with Germans were noted.

In one of the camps at Magdeburg one of these suspected men appeared in the person of a young officer of engaging manners and smart appearance, who wore no definite regimental uniform. He was ostracised by his compatriots and favoured by the Germans, especially by the canteen fraternity. The other Belgians were quite right, as it turned out, for he was a ' wrong 'un.' He planned to abandon his Belgian

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nationality, to marry one of the canteen girls and settle in Germany ; but the censor gave him away and disclosed the fact that he already had a wife and two children in Belgium.

The Belgian officers were no less particular than other nationalities in their observance of national festivities. The Russians observed the name-days of members of the royal family with great ceremonial. The Frenchmen's great day of celebration is, of course, the day of the storming of the Bastille. The Belgians kept royal birthdays, but they were also most particular in observing New Year's Day. It is possible that I may after the lapse of time exaggerate in my mind somewhat the details of a little ceremony of which I was a witness when sharing a large room in Clausthal with Belgian and other prisoners. If I do, let me say at once that I have no intention of throwing ridicule on the Belgians, either with regard to their manners or their conception of the dignity of the occasion. The gravity with which the ceremony was carried out rather tickled me at the time.

New Year's Day, 1916.—Before the usual hour of rising, the Belgians in our room have been occupied in brushing their uniforms and polishing themselves up as if for a ceremonial parade. There seems to be a considerable amount of agitation. Colonel 'Bonhomme,' who is senior Belgian in camp, has rapped out an occasional order which has sent his juniors

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flying off like little teetotums which have come into contact with a big teetotum. At length the Colonel is completely ready and seats himself on a chair; he looks as if he is waiting for the photographer. We are in the depths of winter; pipes are frozen and the bathrooms are closed. Tweedie and I, representatives of Great Britain in the room, perform our ablutionary practices as best we can in our corner of the apartment. Tweedie possesses a foot-bath. This morning, just when we have decided to get out of our beds to commence our toilet, the last of the Belgian Colonel's couriers returns and advances hastily to his chief. On a word from the Colonel the others rally round him and form a group. Yes, it must be the photographer!

At the moment when we were least prepared to withstand a *courant d'air* a loud long rat-a-tat was sounded on the door. It was followed by a pompous opening and a formidable procession of the officers of the Colonel's nationality. I thought the cortège would never end. All were dressed in their ultra-best, black cloth uniforms, square-topped dress caps, breeches, boots, spurs and gloves; all wore solemn faces. As they filed past us each bowed ceremoniously in our direction. I acknowledged each salutation as well as I could with the corner of the towel which I held in my hand. Colonel 'Bonhomme' rose, the visiting army packed round him. A tall major stepped forward as the spokesman.

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He expressed the united good wishes of the Belgian officers for the health and happiness of the Colonel, the Colonel's wife, his dear children, the elders in his family, his equals and collaterals, the younger generation of the house, and the best sentiments and hopes for those on the way to come.

There was a pause : all eyes were now fixed on their chief. Passing his hand rapidly across his face to prevent the falling tears from damping and uncurling his fierce brown moustache, the Colonel struggled with his emotion and, in words which seemed to proceed from the very depths of his heart, made a suitable reply. I had had time to dry myself and had actually slipped into a garment or two, when the assembly turned about as one man and resumed its processional movement across our front. This time I could return the salute with comparative dignity, for I had just time to hitch one shoulder-strap of a beautiful new pair of braces over one shoulder. Tweedie near-by did his best to look imposing too, but he was standing in his foot-bath, and I defy any man to look forcible and stately who reviews a foreign army from such a standpoint.

CHAPTER XVI. THE FRENCH AND RUSSIANS.

THE French are very unlike the Belgians. They lived their lives as they proposed to live them, ignoring the Germans as far as they could. They set their faces against doing anything that could possibly be construed into assisting the German camp staff, whatever camp they happened to be in. To some extent they had to conform to camp rules. They had to appear on parade at 'Appel' at fixed hours, but they could not have been properly described as 'falling in on parade.' Their formation was annoyingly loose: if it occurred to one of them that he wanted to speak to a friend in another part of the line, he walked along to his friend and spoke to him, regardless of the fact that the German non-commissioned officers were counting and re-counting their numbers and making abstruse calculations on a piece of paper. That counting was a tedious business. The staff apparently were satisfied only when three successive counts produced identical numbers, and so in the case of the French the counting had to be done over and over again. Meanwhile the prisoners

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of other nationalities were kept waiting on parade.

The French were really shocked at the Belgians (and British) who formed themselves into sections and did their own counting, and could be trusted to report the actual number present on parade when called upon to do so. They argued that this was rendering assistance to the Germans, assistance that could only result in the long-run in making it possible for the Germans to reduce the number of the camp staff and so enable more men to be kept at the front.

The Germans were fond of repeating that prisoners of war had no rights, but had only duties. The French acknowledged no duties but those to their country. Their duty to their country as prisoners was to be a thorn in the side of their enemies and to see that they kept as large a number of them occupied in the prison camps as possible. As an instance of this attitude, when complaints were made to the Germans about the length of time occupied on the appels, the latter proposed that the senior officer of each nationality should bring a manuscript slip of paper with the number of prisoners entered on each who *should be* present on parade. This they would compare with their own figures, count the prisoners to see that the number on parade corresponded with their own figures, and promised then to dismiss the parade if satisfied they were correct. The Belgians accepted this

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scheme; the British refused to enter the numbers who *should* be on parade, but were willing to undertake to write down the actual numbers who *were* on parade: the French refused altogether to bring any such slips on the parade. The French colonel who happened to be the senior officer in camp where this was brought into force as an order, flatly refused to obey. After repeated refusals he was tried by court-martial and sentenced to a term of imprisonment in months for disobedience of orders. The Colonel completed his term of imprisonment, and at the next camp to which he was transferred took up the same attitude again, preferring to spend his captivity in strict isolation in cells rather than do violence to his conscience by assisting the enemy.

The attitude of a Frenchman towards his enemy in the field at the beginning of the war is shown in sharp contrast with that of one of his Allies in the following incident which was related by a British cavalry officer who had been captured when on patrol in August 1914. A French prisoner, a field officer, standing in a line with others by a roadside with backs to a wall shortly after capture, was ordered by a German sentry to sit down. He commenced to argue with his guard at once and refused to sit. The German threatened him with fixed bayonet; the Frenchman continued to expostulate and pushed the bayonet aside. The German

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bayoneted his prisoner ; thereupon other French prisoners grew excited and Germans on either hand shot or bayoneted those who were expostulating in front of them ; and so on, until it came to where a British cavalry subaltern was standing, who at the moment happened to be talking quietly to his guard in German. This German did not deem it incumbent on him to bayonet the British officer, and so the sequence of deaths was broken. For the sake of demonstrating the Entente Cordiale should that British officer have assumed a truculent air and involved himself in the massacre ? Or, should he have congratulated himself on having broken the sequence and so saved the lives of many possibly who stood below him in the line ?

In the early days of captivity, when the German organisation in camp for feeding the prisoners was conspicuous by its absence, the Frenchmen on the food committee at once took the lead in purchasing stores, organising a kitchen and allotting duties to the volunteers of all nations. The committee was helped by the German staff, who put no obstacle in the way of procuring provisions and who appointed a cook and others to work a system which was initiated by the prisoners themselves. The committee inaugurated potato-peeling parades, relays of dinners in the crowded dining-room and all the manifold duties of supply and service. The French were economical, efficient and gen-

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erous to their allied comrades. They happened at that time to be alone in the possession of money, and they found money to purchase supplies for everybody. If they owned to having no duties in their relations with their captors, they very soon showed that their duty to their country was extended to the Allies who were fighting side by side with themselves.

It may be said at once that British and French prisoners as a whole did not at first understand one another and did not make good stable companions. The French looked upon the British as undemocratic, frigid in their attitude to foreigners and lacking in good manners. The British regarded the French as unsporting, oversensitive and too emotional. There were questions which arose between them which seemed to admit of no compromise, yet they never actually quarrelled, and the Entente Cordiale which bound them together outwardly was felt to be of such immense national importance to both nations that the heat generated by internal discussions in the barrack-rooms merely had the effect of warming the plastic casing of the Entente and rendering it the more elastic. When there are a dozen or a score of human beings inhabiting one room designed to hold a third of those numbers, the Briton's first object is to let in the fresh air, and this he invariably did without consulting the wishes of his neighbours, deeming it right and proper that they should agree. Not

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so the Frenchman : with him a *courant d'air* is a far more deadly evil than 'froust' : civilisation has ordained that there is a time for opening windows, that is for half an hour during the cleaning of rooms after breakfast, and the laws of civilisation must be respected. Neither side would compromise, and so windows became broken, the French took to sleeping inside curtains, the British observed a contemptuous silence, the French coughed, cleared throats and annoyed in many subtle little ways.

It was not till the Verdun days that the eyes of the Britons were fully opened to the best qualities of their French allies. No man in those tense days with a streak of sympathy in his being could then have failed to discover the truly heroic and admirable character of the Frenchman. It was obvious that he was suffering agonies of suspense, he looked starved and eager, his mind was obsessed by the danger to his country, but it was a selfless devotion : one felt that each Frenchman's single thought was one of misery at not being able to assist in Verdun's defence. The German newspapers were always available. Each day that one could congratulate the Frenchmen on another glorious day when the Germans failed to claim the capture of a further fort, the spoken words brought a gleam of gratitude for the sympathy and a tightening of the upper lip that had a most powerful influence in strengthening the Entente.

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Possibly some of the British in captivity were becoming more expansive; certainly some of the French had become more self-contained. A bridge was created by which each nationality could approach at will the interior defences of the other.

There were at all times and in all camps a certain number of the Frenchmen who met and associated with the Englishmen on terms of friendship without any difficulty, as there were Englishmen who had travelled and who knew and appreciated Frenchmen before the war. It was found that if a tennis court were constructed in a camp, there would surely be some Frenchmen in the community who not only played tennis, but who possibly had been at Wimbledon representing France before the war. Some again knew their England, and had entertained Englishmen in France; others had family connections in the allied country. All these having rubbed shoulders with their friends across the water in earlier days, had already passed beyond the fog of ignorance of the other nation's ways and character, and with these the way had already been paved for friendship. When all is said and done, distrust and even hatred are the outcome, not of any natural national antipathy, but of ignorance. In some cases pre-conceived notions had been instilled in childhood and handed down from father to son. To bring England and France closer together, school-

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books should be carefully revised and constructive propaganda, to foster mutual respect and sympathy, should be systematically spread and taught as part of every child's education.

A curious little point of difference was discovered. If an Englishman gives his word of honour, even to his enemy, nothing will shake him from abiding by it. It has been part of the Englishman's creed for centuries, and one likes to think that even without the social penalties which the breaking of his word would involve, no Englishman worthy of the name could be tempted to renounce it. With a Frenchman, however, there is no obligation to his enemy which would not be broken if he thought his country's needs demanded it. The question cropped up in one form or another a hundred times. The Germans understood this. The French were quite open on the subject, and denied themselves the advantages which might on occasions have been theirs by giving their temporary 'word,' rather than run the risk of being impelled to break it. The British Government laid down the form and nature of the 'word' that their officers were permitted to give in order to entitle them to take walks in the country without an armed guard. The French, on the other hand, refused to give their word, which by their code would have been valueless, and had fewer walks in consequence,

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and those were always of the nature of route marches under an armed guard.

Many of the French were ostentatiously slack in matters of dress. Not a little of this slackness was due to a desire to offer a contrast in this respect to their enemies.

On the whole, there were many lasting friendships formed between French and English in captivity.

Of all the Allies the British found the Russians the easiest to get on with. Their temperament was readily understood; they were free from suspicion and not too critical; they appeared to like to associate with the British, and were not too proud to imitate them. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and the British responded readily. The better-educated Russians in many cases spoke English, and were well acquainted with English literature. It was astonishing to find how many of the officers were conversant with our better-known authors, from Shakespeare to the modern novelists. In the barrack-rooms the Russians, in case of a dispute, always gave their votes in support of any British propositions.

On one occasion in the camp at Clausthal the Commandant made it known to the Russians that an order had been issued at Berlin that all Russian prisoners were in future to wear 'bras-sards' on the left arms of their jackets, with the word 'Kriegsgefangener' or the initials

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'K.F.G.' worked on them. The Russians were profoundly depressed by the disgrace (as they viewed it) which the wearing of the brassard would involve in the eyes of the Allies. They protested vigorously. The senior Russian, a General, went for sympathy to the senior British officer. At the next interview of the senior allied officers with the camp Commandant in the latter's office, the awful order was made public. The British officer thereupon applied in the name of all the British officers for permission to wear the brassard likewise. He pointed out that the Germans professed to treat all the allied prisoners alike, and on that profession the British officers formally claimed the honour of sharing the brassard with the Russians. Though his claim was not acceded to, the fact that he had put it forward had the effect which it had been hoped to create with the Russians. They no longer viewed it as a disgrace to wear the brassard when they knew of the attitude taken up by their friends the English. The Russian General showed his appreciation in a slightly embarrassing fashion. As they all emerged from the Commandant's office, beaming with kindness and with outstretched arms, and shouting the words, "The British are sportsmen," the Russian flung himself towards the neck of the senior British officer. Now the Russian stood six feet seven inches in his socks, and he was big in proportion, and the English-

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man was built on more modest lines, so the latter eluded the hug of the bear. They were already firm friends and saw much of each other daily, but to mark this occasion properly the Russian later in the day paid the Englishman a visit of ceremony in his room. He wore his smartest uniform and was perfectly turned out when he arrived to tender his official thanks to the British officers in the name of all the Russian prisoners of war.

Over the Russians there always hung the shadow of impending doom. Every Russian knew that it was only a question of time for the revolution in Russia to come. Their attitude towards the revolution was that it was inevitable and was the price their country had to pay for its backwardness in politics and civilisation. All they prayed for was that the crisis might be delayed until the war was won. There was always tragedy in the air, the passage of secret propaganda in their ranks, and the feeling of helplessness to stem an irresistible current. Russian literature is gloomy and tragic; their music is savage and soul-stirring, weird and thrilling. The Cossack slits his enemy's throat, and expects to have his own slit, if taken in the field. A Russian play on the films seldom ends without the extinction of the hero or the heroine, or both, with all the accompaniments of refined mental torture and black despair. The less educated Russian flies to vodka to

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drown his feelings, when he can get it, but he is sentimental, religious and simple.

One day a Russian priest or 'pope,' who had a permit from Berlin to visit all camps, appeared at the camp at Clausthal. The Russian prisoners of war, his 'children,' were overjoyed. He was embraced, hairy old bear that he was, by every one enthusiastically. He fixed up a service at once, a long harmonious service, and his Russian congregation was in the seventh heaven of happiness. The service over, a great supper followed ; spirits had been procured and an orgy was carried on far into the night with special dispensation. The old priest next morning was a shocking sight. He was to be seen washing his face before breakfast, catching a trickle of running water, poured by one of the officers from a jug, in his outstretched palms, and bathing his heated temples. Masses of iron-grey hair tumbled in a shock over his forehead, his eyes were bloodshot, his beard ragged and tangled. He was about the most unkissable object that could well be imagined, yet his departure after breakfast was the signal for a renewed epidemic of osculation on the part of his flock.

The varieties of Russian to be met with were endless ; every province of the East was represented, and there were many who lived most solitary lives, having little in common with their fellows. One was known to the British as

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'Fly-by-night.' He kept his bed by day, and was supposed to be wasting away from consumption. The night was his time for exercise and enjoyment; he drank deeply and then wandered, dodging sentries by standing in the shadows, descending on his friends in various rooms, then flying along the passages as if pursued by devils.

The Russian General did his utmost to have the liquor traffic stopped, representing that during the war all strong drink in Russia was prohibited, but without avail until the reigning Commandant was succeeded by a better man. For a period, while the vodka was on sale for the corruption of the Russians, the camp was often a howling Bedlam at night.

A very pathetic figure was a Cossack officer who wore the uniform of an officer of infantry. This man had escaped death as a Cossack (for the Germans were said to make no Cossack a prisoner, just as the Cossacks took no German prisoners) by donning the clothes of a dead linesman on the battlefield before his capture. By this action he became a nameless outcast. His education had been slight; he attempted to speak no foreign tongue, and he conversed little with the other Russians. Having discarded his own name, he could never correspond with his friends, whose address would of itself have given him away. He was a quiet, inoffensive little Turcoman; he ate little, received no parcels,

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and he grew visibly thinner day by day. He was known as 'the Mole.' He developed consumption, which galloped away with him as it did with so many of his comrades in captivity. He was buried in Germany under an assumed name, and no man was ever the wiser as to his identity.

CHAPTER XVII. TOMMY AS A PRISONER.

IN war it is inevitable that a number of the combatants will become prisoners. From the nature of the services men are called upon to render, no matter how stubbornly they may fight or how abhorrent the idea of capture may be to them, the chances of war may land them in a situation from which there is no escape, involving the loss of their freedom. A beleaguered garrison may eventually be compelled to surrender, a rearguard may be surrounded and mopped up, a patrol may walk into an ambush and have no time or opportunity to defend itself. One of the primary objects of military training is to reduce the number of these and similar catastrophes to a minimum, by developing a man's military intelligence beforehand and his capacity to defend himself when an emergency occurs. Always with a view to discourage unnecessary surrender, for which the severest penalties are justifiably reserved, orders are framed and issued to troops before going to war to point out a soldier's obligation to fight to the last, and to advise

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him as far as possible in the methods by which he can avoid capture.

He is taught to court death in preference to captivity. Yet inevitably many good soldiers come into the enemy's hands. In bygone wars a prisoner had been an asset in the hands of his captors. He used to represent a sum of money varying in amount according to his rank. It used to be good policy to treat him with consideration, to see that he was well fed and well housed, so that, when the day came for handing him over, he should be in good condition and speak well of his treatment. Perhaps it was wished that he should not be too much adverse to coming again. Nowadays a private soldier has a certain market value as a manual labourer, but an officer or superior non-commissioned officer has none. His captors can make no use of him and can get nothing for him by barter or exchange. It may be argued possibly that this slump in the value of prisoners is attributable either to the abolition of slavery or to the state-ownership of armed forces.

In modern wars exchange of prisoners is no longer practised unless they are incapacitated from further fighting. The lot of a prisoner of war is a peculiarly grievous one : he is between the devil and the deep sea.

Yet for obvious reasons it would not be sound policy to attempt to make the prisoner's

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lot too endurable. In the Boer War at the commencement of this century the Boers initiated a policy of extreme friendliness towards some of their prisoners as the campaign advanced. Some of the newly raised troops from England were very young, very untrained and very futile. At the time when Lindley was invested, the Boer General, De Wet, used constantly to capture the morning mounted patrols ; and on one occasion he sent two young prisoners in under a flag of truce to General Paget. They were minus their jackets and breeches, and a note accompanied them to this effect : " Dear General, please chain up these two devils ; I am tired of catching them ! "

Had these patrols had cause to fear the treatment they were likely to receive at the hands of the enemy, it is probable they would not tamely have delivered up their horses and rifles nor have suffered deprivation of their outer garments so patiently. It was consequently imperative to make their lives as unendurable for them as possible when they got back, in order to discourage others from copying their example.

The method for recruiting for the war in South Africa at that period was at fault. It was not realised then, as it came to be realised in the last war, that unusually high pay is not necessary as an incentive to induce young Britons to fight for their country, and that the class of young

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men who are attracted mainly by the hope of gaining it, is not the class that proves most useful in the field.

On the other hand, the Germans in the Great War did not err on the side of leniency.

It is a prisoner's duty, as no doubt it is his pleasure, to attempt to escape if he sees an opportunity. He generally has to make his opportunities, but an opportunity that will afford him a 'dog's chance' of crossing the frontier does not occur to one man in a thousand, except during periods when for some reason or other vigilance has for a time become slack or when the end of hostilities is imminent.

On arrival at his camp in Germany the British soldier was at once faced with a hundred questions as to his line of conduct as a prisoner, most of which he had to answer for himself by the light of his instinct, aided by his inclinations and education. There is no book which has been written to guide him. Possibly the League of Nations may in time evolve some rules of international policy to be applied to the case of prisoners of war which may save the latter much hardship and agony of mind?

It is an old saying that "All is fair in Love and War"; but is this a reliable guide? In war-time at least this has been the excuse for countless acts of meanness, for thefts, ingratitude, lies of all kinds and even savagery. In fact in their dealings with their captors men have

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often argued that nothing of any kind or description was sacred, with the one single exception of the Word of Honour.

Giving one's parole in the old sense is now obsolete, but during the Great War a temporary parole under certain conditions and for certain purposes might permissibly be given by officer prisoners.

No undertaking of the same nature could be exacted from the British N.C.O.'s and men who were employed on the farms in Germany. Many of these men thought it their duty to their country to do all the damage they could at sowing time, and whenever opportunity arose, to the enemy crops ; and by their general conduct and attempted escapes they made it impossible for the farmers to treat them with any kind of leniency. All men knew that corporals and private soldiers could legally be called upon to work. They knew that an enemy Government should not put its prisoners to do any work of a military nature or for the manufacture of munitions of war. Who was to say where the line was to be drawn between work that was permissible and work that was not ?

Again, some men argued in favour of orderly and dignified behaviour in the camps ; they were ready to assist the enemy authorities in carrying out the regular organisation and interior economy of the places of internment. On the other hand, it was argued that to give any form

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of assistance was to aid the enemy by making it possible for him to reduce his camp staff in proportion to the help he got from the prisoners themselves. Rather, they argued, they should give all the trouble they possibly could, and force him to maintain a maximum guard in camp and so reduce his man-power at the fighting front. Holding these views, at the risk of their lives prisoners totally refused to work in mines, because there was no one to tell them what was right and what was wrong work.

That this point of view was carried too far there is little doubt. The Allies as prisoners presented a sharp contrast to the Germans in this matter of work. It is generally conceded that the Germans were docile in captivity; they were orderly, ready to work, and they gave themselves to discipline. French prisoners went to the other extreme; they lost no opportunity of giving trouble, of acting insubordinately to Germans in authority and of inconveniencing their hosts in every imaginable way.

The United States Ambassador at Berlin, and his deputy Mr Jackson, who between them visited all the British prisoners' camps, considered that the British prisoners went too far in their refusal to work. They thought that the attitude of the British in this respect did not compare favourably with that of Germans in England. They were understood to be of opinion that soldiers could lawfully be called

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upon to work on the farms and in the mines, and that they could not lawfully refuse. Surely it should be possible for soldiers to have some authoritative instruction on such questions, to act as their guide, should they find themselves in the unfortunate position of prisoners of war ?

There have been many stories of the brutality of the Germans occasioned by this question of work in the mines. British Tommies showed that they could not be bent, but they could be broken ; and in some cases they were broken. The Germans used force when argument was not effective. Had there been an international ruling which a neutral Ambassador could cite with authority, we might have been saved many tales of horror.

At the officers' camp at Clausthal there was at first one punishment cell for refractory prisoners. This was before the camp was turned into a camp for British prisoners only, when seventeen new cells were built (and regularly occupied). The cell was a dark hole, windowless and unventilated, squeezed in between the electric power-house and the piggery. It was not a place where one would have expected to find a human being confined. One day a Belgian orderly (there were soldiers of each nationality employed at the camp as officers' orderlies, cook-house orderlies, &c.) informed the senior British officer that there was a British soldier in the cell who had been brought in for

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punishment from a neighbouring mine for refusal to work. He was being fed on bread and water twice a day. The Belgian offered to carry any message to him on the following day, as he had been detailed to take the man his bread and water. He risked taking a good deal more than a bare message, and from that day the prisoner's ration was furtively supplemented daily with supplies of meat lozenges, chocolate and other compressed foods—he even had cigarettes—and eventually he left the camp, after his bread-and-water punishment of fourteen days, in a thoroughly satisfactory condition of mind and body. He was sent back to Hamelin, his parent camp, by the German authorities as a hopeless case of obstinacy, and no further attempt was ever made to send him to the mines to work.

Whilst this man was in the cell at Clausthal (his name was Robert Goulding, a private of the South Lancashire Regiment) he transmitted two pencil messages in which he gave the particulars of his case in answer to letters that were written to him. He said every endeavour had been made to force him to work in the mines, by threats, by actual blows, by leaving him alone at the bottom of the mine at night, &c., but that nothing in the world would make him do work which could assist the Germans to make ammunition for use against his own countrymen. He wrote: "I want you to tell me, sir, if I am doing right." The only answer possible was that he

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was right ; and he was at the same time reminded that his name was now known and that, if he did not survive, his name and his conduct would be in time reported, and justice would be done to his memory.

Goulding was heard of occasionally afterwards through a subterranean process of transmission of news by which Hameln was in fairly regular correspondence with Clausthal, and at the end of the war it was a source of some satisfaction to the British officer who took an interest in his case to read Private Goulding's name in the Honours List issued early in 1919 for good work done by prisoners of war. He was awarded the Military Medal. Possibly it came as a surprise to the recipient : it was at any rate deserved.

There was a regular succession of orderlies in the camp at Clausthal. They were selected for the duty from among the soldiers interned at Hameln, a place which was in the same area of command. They were almost invariably men who had recently been in hospital and had been recommended 'light duty' for a period. Their sojourn in the hill station was of great benefit to their health ; they used to come up looking weak and emaciated, and, although their job as orderly was no sinecure and food was very scarce, in a few weeks they looked quite different men. Their attitude towards the German soldiers was a little condescending, rather distant, sometimes affable. They got what

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amusement they could out of Fritz under the somewhat depressing circumstances.

The following incident is typical of this attitude.

The British orderly employed in removing the pig-bucket from the canteen kitchen to the piggery had to pass through a big wire gate in the cage which surrounded the camp: the piggery was outside the fence behind a little row of sheds, and was not itself within the view of the sentry. One morning there was a new sentry on the gate, a large, red-faced, double-chinned, treble-necked sentry. The orderly was observed to descend the kitchen steps with his bucket. He took a comprehensive view of the sentry (the fact that the sentry was a new-comer was not likely to pass unobserved, for prisoners had the habit of studying the features as well as the idiosyncrasies of their gaolers), advanced to the gate, put down his bucket and, in the blindest tones and apparently with vast respect, addressed the sentry. The manner and the tone were so flattering that the sentry inserted his key, and with alacrity threw open the gate, beaming genially the while. Now it happened that within the cage a British officer was standing close by, who was a witness of the little comedy and overheard the words addressed by the orderly to the guardian of the gate. They were: "Open that ther ruddy gate, Sausage-face, and look sharp about it too, if

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you don't want to have this bucket of slops chucked over you ! ”

Fortunately that German had no knowledge of the English language. The orderly went gaily on his way, rejoicing that there was still a little humour left in life.

There was a sequel to this incident.

A few days later, when the same German sentry was on duty at the same gate, a few minutes before his tour of duty expired, a British prisoner came down the steps from the kitchen direction, dressed exactly as the previous orderly had been dressed, and carrying a bucket in the same manner. He might have been the same orderly. He addressed the sentry in the same genial manner, was ushered out through the gate and disappeared round the corner in the direction of the piggery. It is possible that the sentry omitted to pass on to the man who relieved him the information that the British orderly was outside. In any case no suspicion was attached to the incident until some hours later when some of the guard went round to the piggery to look for the orderly. They found the bucket empty, but no sign of the orderly. At the next roll call of officer prisoners it was discovered that one of the number was an absentee. It was the man who had been witness of the foregoing incident : he was ' quick in the uptake.' The bucket which he carried had been filled with his going-away kit, covered over with a few odds

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and ends of kitchen stuff. Unfortunately he was subsequently recaptured before he could reach the frontier.

Though extremely good-tempered as a general rule there were naturally exceptions among the Tommies who came to the officer prisoners' camps for duty. The Entente Cordiale was occasionally rather severely strained in the orderlies' quarters. On one occasion in my capacity of senior British officer at Clausthal I was asked to deal with the case of one of our British orderlies who had given an ally orderly a black eye.

I asked him to give an explanation of what had happened to provoke him to this display of wrath. "It was like this, sir," he said, "him and me was under the douche next door to one another and he splashed his cold water over me. I told him to chuck it. He continued to do so. I said a bit louder he was to chuck it. He looked at me and began to talk his language at me; how was I to know what he meant by it? So I hit him in the eye!"

Such little misunderstandings are inevitable until Esperanto becomes the universal language.

The orderly in this case was sent back by the Commandant to his parent-camp at Hameln as a punishment.

So much for poor Tommy as a prisoner. As a general rule his reserve of high spirits and his natural sense of humour carried him far and

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helped him to live through the trials and difficulties by which he was beset as a prisoner, for he was quick to discover the silver lining to every cloud that overshadowed his life. I maintain that the Tommies suffered much greater physical hardships than the officers in captivity, and it is their due, if any amelioration can be devised for future eventualities, that attention should be turned first in their direction.

CHAPTER XVIII. A FÊTE.

IN the autumn of 1916 the number of the British prisoners of war in German camps had been augmented by the addition of various odd lots, and notably by the arrival of young flying officers who had been brought down by Germans behind their line on the Western front. Regretful as the loss of these gallant fliers must have been on the front, they were, morally speaking, an important acquisition to the community in the camp at Clausthal. They infused a new spirit of adventure and optimism and a wider and saner outlook into a society which was inevitably suffering from the staleness of prolonged captivity. They introduced new ideas and they brought first-hand news: it was with pride that one realised the character of the younger generation, whose picked representatives were conducting the war in the air and whose exploits gave proof that the spirit of the race, far from flagging, was waxing in quality and force.

There had recently been attached to the camp certain young German flying officers for short spells of duty. Their presence there had been

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notably acceptable, especially when they talked of their life and work on the front on the occasions when they accompanied us on our walks. It was obvious that they too were imbued with the new spirit of the chivalry of the air.

One could not help being impressed with the vigour and spirit of enterprise of our young fliers, and the simile was presented to one's mind of a flight of young eagles forced by the weather to come down and share for a time the society of a colony of penguins in some antarctic region. One could fancy the penguins enjoying the association, proud as birds to claim kinship and wishing to keep them with them, but a little anxious owing to the apprehension that the newcomers might at any moment be off on a renewed flight and leave them to their drabbish existence of comparative helplessness.

It was important to make the most of the fliers while we had them with us and to exploit their abilities.

For a long time there had been a desire in the minds of the officer prisoners in the camp to do something to ameliorate the lot of the soldier prisoners in the neighbouring camps in Hanover, but the difficulty was to discover in what manner assistance could be rendered. The previous winter there had seemed to be no possibility of cheering any soldier's existence outside the community of the orderlies who shared our own camp life.

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We had organised shows for them and had been permitted to give all the orderlies a real Christmas dinner. The British orderlies were constituted hosts for the occasion and had received the wherewithal for the entertainment from funds supplied by the officers. They had to make all the arrangements, and, in fact, were in a better position to do so through the canteen than were the officers. The dinner was held in a long low attic in the roof of the main building, which at that time was occupied by some of the orderlies of the camp.

A few of the promoters of the feast had been permitted to visit the Christmas party, accompanied by the Russian General, and a short speech of greeting was made. It was an occasion which the Russian General was never tired of referring to with gratitude, for there was at the time a considerable number of Russian orderlies and it was impossible for the Russians, from lack of funds, to organise anything of the sort for themselves.

But during the autumn of 1916, with the help of all the pent-up energy of the flying contingent and their talent, which was diverse and considerable, added to the capabilities of many of the older prisoners, a much more ambitious programme was set on foot.

The result was a succession of entertainments, and the festivities culminated in December in a bazaar and fête, at which there were exhibitions

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of painting, carving, needlework, lacework, &c. Evening concerts, dances, fencing, boxing, and a gala cinema show were other features.

One of the great events of the fête of an unusual character was an auction sale of programmes in the evening before the great day itself. The covers of these programmes had been illustrated by officers of all nationalities, and some of them were undoubted works of art. Those who had not the money to lavish on the purchase of such things gave their talent and their time to producing effective covers ; those who did not paint and had the money, proved to be remarkably generous patrons.

The whole camp was assembled in the hall, and the illustrated programmes, which had been on view, were put up to auction one by one. The bidding was in marks. An enthusiastic auctioneer carried his audience with him to a pitch of fervid zeal, until some of the painters must have felt heated indeed with the glow of achievement in viewing the success of their productions. The highest price realised for a single programme was, if I remember rightly, two hundred and fifty marks : among the British artists the works of Martin-Tomson and Kennedy fetched high figures. The fine sum that resulted from the fête was accounted for largely by the popularity of this sale. Other events were not calculated to do much more than pay their way.

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The Variety programme arranged for the 3rd December 1916 was indeed a long one, but the promoters were determined that the camp members should have their money's worth and that an opportunity should be given to every one who possessed real talent to display it before an appreciative audience.

The programmes were printed in French. The first curtain was raised at 3.15 P.M. for a 'Matinée Littéraire et Musicale.' The Russians were well to the fore in this event; they supplied the string orchestra which played delightful music and was the backbone of the entertainment.

The second part of the programme ('Rideau, 5 P.M.') was a fencing display, foils and sabres, given by those masters of the art, Captain Wand-Tetley and Lieutenant Keymeulen. This was followed by a boxing tournament, Wand-Tetley's team including one Belgian and five Britons including himself.

The third part (at 7 P.M.) was a concert which the Russian band gave under the conductorship of their bandmaster, M. Branchteter. It was supplemented with the piano (Colonel Smislovsky), violin (Lieutenant Heintz) and 'cello (Lieutenant Frost).

There was a short interval for food before the fourth and last part of the programme of the day was staged. This consisted of a farce, '33 Rue de Commensal,' in which Captain M'Guire-Bate, Lieutenant John Hay, R.N.A.S., and

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Lieutenant Heintz took part ; they played to a most appreciative and inspiring audience. /

After this there followed some national dances. A Highland sword dance by Captain Freddy Bell of the Gordons proved, as always, a most conspicuous attraction. A one-step (*Danseur*, Lieutenant Lambie ; *Danseuse*, Captain Wand-Tetley) evoked rounds of applause ; and two Russian dances, "Hopak" and "Trepak" brought the entertainment to a conclusion on the top note of enthusiasm.

A long programme, as has been said before, but not a dull moment !

I expect the Germans, who sat and applauded off and on throughout the day, were glad to have their charges so deeply interested in such an innocent way ; months of preparation and rehearsal, too, had kept a proportion of the prisoners in active employment and out of mischief.

The grand cinema show took place two evenings later ; it comprised 2640 metres of films from Berlin, with the orchestra accompaniment of the Russian band.

The object of the fête had been to raise a sum of money for distribution among the soldiers' prisoners of war camps, a proportion to go to certain Belgian, British, French, Russian and Servian funds. The fête was a complete success financially and a sum of approximately two hundred and eighty pounds was raised. It was

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one thing to raise the money ; it was quite another to achieve the distribution of the fund after it was raised.

The money was collected early in December 1916. It had been hoped to dispose of it in Christmas gifts. We could actually see from our camp into a corner of a Russian camp where we hoped to bestow a part of the gifts, but money, even if we had been able to convey money, was of no use to a poor Russian prisoner.

By agreement it was arranged that the senior British officer should be responsible for disposing of it all. The Germans would not touch it, nor would they at first give facilities for posting it or getting it out of the camp. Prisoners could not write letters, except to their ordinary correspondents, to persons in or out of Germany, without very special permission. Every imaginable channel was explored. Christmas passed. By a rare chance the prisoners received a visit from Mr J. S. Kennard, who came from Berlin representing the branch in Germany of the American Y.M.C.A. Here was a grand opportunity ; we gave him the full details and he gave a sympathetic hearing to our request, and we handed over the fund to him with a sense of great relief.

But back came the money, for by the time Mr Kennard got to Berlin, diplomatic relations between the U.S.A. and Germany were broken. I give a copy of his letter which accompanied

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the money (letter No. 1) at the end of this chapter.

An attempt to arrange the business through Copenhagen also failed. Finally leave was granted to send the money by cheque to Messrs Cox & Co. in London. This really was a great concession under the circumstances, and we were grateful for it. The letter acknowledging the receipt of the money by cheque is attached also (letter No. 2).

It was not even then all plain sailing, though Cox & Co. managed to distribute the greater part of it to the centres we had named. The account could not actually be closed till September 1919, when the balance was handed over to the Servian Relief Fund (*vide* letter No. 3).

Letter No. 1.

DEUTSCHES KOMITEE DER KRIEGSGEFANGENENHILFE
DER CHRISTLICHEN VEREINE JUNGER MANNER
Unter Dem Vorsitz Seiner Grossherzoglichen
Hoheit Des Prinzen Max Von Baden.

BERLIN, Feb. 9, 1917.

To the Senior British Officer,
Officierlager, Clausthal.

DEAR SIR, In view of the break in diplomatic relations I am compelled to leave to-morrow for Switzerland, and so will not be able to visit you this Sunday as I had planned. Above all in importance is

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the question of the parcels for the needy men in the commandos so splendidly subscribed to by the officers in your camp. Next to the sorrow of leaving this splendid work, nothing could grieve me more than having to state that now after all these months of effort, after having definite assurance that the goods in question for the needy men would reach them, that now in this eleventh hour the whole matter should have to be cancelled and I compelled to send back the money. I had thought that in view of the fact that 5000 marks was in English money outside the country that still it might be possible to employ at least this for the object intended, but even here the head of our work in this country says it will be out of the question to act, as in view of the present state of the diplomatic relations any possible misunderstanding on the part of the authorities of our actions must be even more guarded against than formerly. Hence I am herewith sending back the money in question under separate cover, thru the kindness of the kommandantur. There is just one way opened still: for you men personally to notify your banks or friends to deposit the money in question with our office in Denmark: then we will have a right to act (in all probability), but from here, not only can such money not cross the frontier, but our receiving of the money here would be displeasing to the authorities. If the way opens up later to act further of course, we shall do everything within our power to be of service to you and your comrades. It is planned for our bureau in Berlin to continue seeking to serve you thru correspondence, and we shall do everything you ask of us just in so far as the government shall both allow and approve.

Regretting exceedingly thus to have to leave you,

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and especially my ultimate failure after all my correspondence and days of work to secure the things asked of me, and hoping also to see you again, I remain,

Most sincerely yours,

(Signed) J. S. KENNARD, Jr.

Letter No. 2.

COX & Co.

16 CHARING CROSS, LONDON, S.W. 1.

14th May 1917.

SIR,—We beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 6th May, enclosing 29 cheques to the total value of £275, 17s., which sum we have placed to the credit of an account which we have opened under the name of the "Clausthal Prisoners of War Benefit Fund," as requested.

We have communicated with the Prisoners of War Department of the French Red Cross, the Serbian Relief Fund, the Relief for Belgian Prisoners in Germany and the Russian Prisoners of War Help Committee, with whom we are arranging for the despatch of parcels to the Prisoners of War in the Camps at Clausthal, Hütte, Grund and Lautenthal.

We regret that it has not been possible for us to obtain the names and addresses of the individual prisoners, but we have given instructions for the cases to be forwarded through a neutral Committee in Holland addressed to the Presidents of the respective Committees in each Camp, and with an addressed postcard for acknowledgment inside each parcel.

We understand that many cases have been sent to

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Prisoners' Camps in this way, and acknowledgments received, and we trust that we shall be equally successful in this case.

We are, Sir, Your obedient servants,
(Signed) Cox & Co.

Lieut.-Col. R.C. Bond, K.O.Y.L.I.,
Offiziergefangenlager,
Clausthal,
Germany.

Letter No. 3.

Cox & Co.

HEAD OFFICE, 16 CHARING CROSS,
LONDON, S.W. 1.
5th September 1919.

SIR,

re Clausthal Prisoners of War Fund.

With reference to your recent call, we beg to inform you that we have now paid the balance of £28, 9s. to the Serbian Relief Fund, 5 Cromwell Road, S.W.

We are, Sir, Your obedient servants,
For COX & CO.
(Signed) J. H. WOOLLACOTT,
Manager "H" Branch.

Lieut.-Col. R. C. Bond.

CHAPTER XIX. GENERAL'S INSPECTION.

AT Clausthal Camp the year 1917 had opened dismally for the prisoners. Peace seemed farther away than ever. The Allies had recently promulgated their answer to the proposition of peace put forward by the U.S. Government on the basis of Germany's victory and an agreement that the Allies forced the war. So much was gleaned from the German papers. It was not surprising that there was 'nothing doing' on this basis.

There had been a break in the severe weather of the Harz Mountains. A thaw had set in and for days it had rained continuously. This entailed a lack of exercise which was so essential to health, mental and physical. To make up for the want of outdoor exercise, indoor industries were carried on under pressure. Lectures were arranged; tunnel-boring clubs sprang into existence; theatrical clubs were formed; and some Russians started a cinema company, who were permitted to purchase a good lantern and to hire good films from Berlin. The pictures proved to be a great attraction. The dining-hall was

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a big building fitted with an ample stage. The use of the stage for rehearsals was permitted, while sanction was given for two film shows to be given each week.

All this activity was healthy, and the various interests kept the majority of the inmates of the camp occupied. There were many other minor industries.

On the 17th January 'Charlie's Aunt' was produced for the first time. Cecil Kerr of the R.F.C., who had acted in 'Charlie's Aunt' in the London company before the war, was the producer. He proved very capable, and worked hard on the material available, drilling the characters with unflinching tact and good humour, until the players satisfied him and he considered the play fit for production. 'Charlie's Aunt' had never been played by amateurs, so he wrote to Mrs Brandon Thomas, who owned her late husband's copyright, and asked for her permission for the prisoners of war to play it. Not only was the necessary permission readily accorded, but Mrs Brandon Thomas sent out typed copies of all the parts, and gave her kindly blessing to the performance.

On the great night the hall was packed with the prisoners of all nationalities. The front row of seats was reserved for the German Commandant and the staff with some of their friends. The play was an unqualified success. The Commandant, who could be genial and kindly, as

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he had shown by the assistance he had given towards the production of this and other plays, was loud in his applause and obviously enjoyed himself hugely.

Precautions had been taken about the issue of the costumes, which came from Berlin. The prisoners were not allowed to keep them in their possession, for they might have been utilised by escaping prisoners for disguise in their attempts to get away. They were kept in a box in the Kommandantur and issued a short time only before the performance. Unfortunately the wigs did not arrive from Berlin in time, and local wigs had to be procured. In spite of this the 'girls' in the play made up quite charmingly, and a Gurkha major was turned out most becomingly as the real 'Donna.' One young lady looked so attractive that some of the Russians fell instantly in love with 'her,' and at supper after the play vied with one another in their efforts to please 'her.'

The takings for the seats amounted to three hundred and seventy-seven marks (at a mark a head), a sum which just about covered the expenses.

'Charlie's Aunt' was succeeded by two little French plays. They were well acted, and the 'women' were clever and refined, a fact which was essential for a really successful production; for the wit in the play 'Prêtez-moi ta femme' is sparkling and amusing, but the situations are

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very 'French.' The French players were very economical about making their dresses. They did not go to the expense of ordering them from Berlin, but cut them out and made them themselves in a way that none of the British officers could have rivalled. Indeed it must be agreed that one has seldom met a British officer who was capable of sewing on a button, much less of making a decent buttonhole; certainly none who could have designed, cut out and fitted a lady's dress. True there was one Highland officer in the camp who was an exception to the general rule. He knitted the most excellent socks and stockings, and was so versatile that he could read a book, knit stockings and play a game of chess all at one time, but it is doubtful if he could have made a lady's dress.

The cinema was the private enterprise, as I have said, of some Russian officers. The regular delivery of the films from Berlin was somewhat precarious; all the films had to be unrolled and tested before they could be put on the curtain: their variety was great. Austrian, German, French, English and Russian films were put on. Two performances were given each week for some time, until one day a German General came to inspect the camp. From that date all privileges of the kind were severely curtailed. The number was reduced to one cinema performance and one play each month.

This General's inspection was a notable event :

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it was not calculated to leave a happy or a fragrant memory behind it. This was the manner of it.

In the middle of one of the cinema shows, when the big hall was in darkness, the great door at the back of the hall was suddenly thrown open and a strident voice called the occupants of the room to 'Attention!' No one moved in his seat, and probably no one realised that the order had been given in earnest. The lights were turned up, and it was seen, when all heads were turned in the direction of the interrupter, that a German officer attended by a staff officer, was standing in the doorway. It was General Von H., the officer commanding the division of Hanover of which Clausthal was a part. The order 'Achtung!' was repeated, and all then rose to their feet. The old Commandant, with flowing white moustache, walrus-like, looked pale and troubled as he stood behind him. The General strode through the hall, keeping the prisoners standing while he entered the canteen by the kitchen doorway. As the electric lights were all ablaze the prisoners could see all that occurred on the other side of the grille where the daily food was issued. The General was no less an object of terror to the canteen staff than he proved later to be to the prisoners. The kitchen staff were drawn up in a line standing strictly to attention. On the right was the wife of the canteen manager,

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Frau Wedekind, a colossal woman, now purple in the face, standing with protruding lower lip and eyes fixed on the General. Her assistant stood next to her, and then the kitchen and scullery girls in order, all looking as if they were transfixed with awe and apprehension. The General passed down the line and made blood-curdling guttural observations which sent a shiver through the ranks. The inspection of the premises, of the cooking-pots and the food, then followed. At the end of it, all the prisoners of war were ordered to go to their rooms, the lights were turned off, the hall was closed, and the first part of the inspection was over, but not before the General had given out in a loud voice to the Commandant that in future the prisoners would not be indulged in the manner of the past.

The second part of the inspection took place next morning. After breakfast all attended the Appel as usual in the open space in front of the buildings. After waiting in expectation a little time, the guard were seen suddenly to rush to the gate at the double and to fall in and salute as the General entered. There was perfect silence as he came down the entrance drive. Passing down the line, he glared at every one. The Belgians on the right were drawn up to attention; the General made just the slightest acknowledgment. The Italians came next. In passing them he said loudly in withering tones,

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"These are our friends!" Then came the French, whose attitude was casual in the extreme. "These are our enemies; treat them as enemies every time!" was his comment to the Commandant. The Russians stood quietly to attention; they received no acknowledgment whatever. Last in order stood the British. "Ach!" said the General, "no doubt there are some of these who understand German?" The Commandant hastened to explain that the British stood on parade in order of priority of capture. The General at once placed himself in front of the right-hand man, standing with his back to him almost on the latter's toes. He then said, addressing the Commandant in loud tones so that all could hear, "The British on the Western front are now forcing their German prisoners to come up behind their lines under gun-fire to carry ammunition into the trenches. This is all one can expect from the Baralong people. I am hoping soon to receive the order to send the British officer prisoners of war to the front to be shot down in the same way by their own shot and shell." This he repeated at intervals down the line.

The prisoners on parade were then dismissed to their rooms.

No sooner had two of the senior British officers gained their own room than the door was opened violently and the order 'Attention' was given. These two officers were the only occupants of the room, and they stood up to attention while

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the General advanced into the room followed by the Commandant, whose face displayed anxiety. The General, an undistinguished-looking, thick-set little man, advanced to a table where one of the prisoners had his writing things. There was a wooden frame on the table into which his family's photographs were temporarily fixed. The General seized this frame, and with no possible object except to insult the owner, began to pluck the photographs out of the frame one by one. He chucked the first one on the table with a grunt ; he took the second, a photograph of two children, in his fingers, and said words which sounded like the equivalent to 'ugly brats.' At this horrifying exhibition of bad manners the old Commandant could no longer restrain himself. His agitation was obvious, and he whispered audibly, " Excellency, those are the photographs of an officer who has friends among the nobility of our country ; he receives parcels from — a relative of General von Bissing." The effect of these words was instantaneous. It was obvious that General von H. was a much smaller fish than General von Bissing. The story might get to the ears of General von Bissing. With the air of a terrier pup who has dashed towards an inoffensive-looking cat and is confronted with a sardonic glare, he was disconcerted and his attitude seemed to say, " Sorry, my mistake." He turned on his heel and left the room.

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His next exploit was a visit to the place where the contents of parcels were issued to the prisoners through a window or 'guichet' in the wall. The General entered the issuing-room and addressed the German staff in words that could be heard by the queue of waiting officers in the passage outside. He dilated on the enormities of the British, on the necessity of letting them have the contents of their parcels under international agreement, but added, "You must give them the contents, but not an atom of paper or string, and no tins or boxes, just the contents, and let them carry them off as they best can." Then, seizing a great knife used for cutting the string and prising open the boxes, he advanced on an unoffending veal and ham pie which had been turned out of its tin and was standing on the counter, and added, "This is how you should let them have their food." He hacked the pie in bits, probed it all over to see that it contained no contraband goods such as maps or compasses, and pushed the wreckage over the counter for its owner to collect the bits. That pie, however, was not collected.

The General was attended by another high officer of the Administrative Staff, whose part it was to dot the i's and cross the t's of his General's orders. This man had English blood in his veins, his mother being of the family of a great headmaster of an English public school. His duties possibly were in some instances

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somewhat distasteful, for obviously his general was a bully; but whatever the mixture of his feelings might have been, he effectually seconded his superior's efforts to browbeat the British officers with whom he came in contact.

Between them these officers made a lasting impression on the camp. The old Commandant (Horn) was removed, and a regular officer from the retired list, who had been invalided from service at the front, was appointed in his place, Hauptmann Langenbeck. This officer's duty was to introduce the reforms. He was a chivalrous gentleman with a strong sense of duty, a man to be respected. In his opening address to the representatives of the prisoners he made a very good impression. He spoke of his duty as a German officer to carry out his instructions; of his sympathy for all prisoners of war; and of his intention, when he could honourably do so, to temper the wind to the shorn lambs. He did not have any very great opportunity to carry out his good intentions, but while he lasted as Commandant, he never swerved from the line he took up. There was a junior officer named Wolf, appointed at the same time to be his 'Leutnant,' who did his best to neutralise his Commandant's best efforts and who was generally credited with being a spy, placed in the camp to watch and report on the Hauptmann. This would be quite in accord with German practice. Anyway, after a few weeks the Hauptmann

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was removed 'for the good of his health,' and Herr Wolf reigned in his stead for a brief and savage period. Herr Wolf did evil in the estimation of the prisoners and had no redeeming point.

Before the inspection the canteen folk had been heard to refer to General von H. as the 'Devil of Hanover.' After the inspection the prisoners in Clausthal camp, especially after they had heard tales which reached them of the General's treatment of the soldier-prisoners at Hameln, failed to find any word in the English tongue which would adequately describe what they thought of him. All the known labels were discovered to be futile and expressionless.

It was learnt immediately after the General's visit that the United States had broken off diplomatic relations with Germany. The prisoners, who were accustomed to look for a silver lining to every cloud, found compensation for the more rigorous treatment that followed the inspection, in the conviction that it must have been dictated from Berlin in anger and disappointment at the trend of events.

CHAPTER XX. THE CHIEF BURGLAR.

AMONG the arrivals in Clausthal in the third year of the war there came, transferred from some other camp, a young officer, fair, slim and alert, of unobtrusive manner; a man of few words, intelligent and resourceful. He had the air of a man with a purpose, but he did not display the nature of his purposes on his brow, and it took time to discover what was his immediate purpose in life: however, one felt instinctively that to achieve his purpose he could be as tenacious as any British bulldog. One realised that he made few confidants, but that if any man was in his secrets it was his one particular ally and faithful pupil. As the days went on one noted with increasing appreciation the strength of mind, the resource and utter disregard of self, which characterised this modest young subaltern.

One of the camp industries which was known to exist, but which for obvious reasons was never inquired into by the senior British officers, was the map and compass workshop. The art of escaping was studied and pursued, not merely as an occupation but as a profession, by some

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of the prisoners of war. There were casual escapers who worked alone or in pairs, but there were also trained escapers whose preparations were made with elaborate forethought, who had trained their bodies into fitness for a twenty-two days' journey across country to the frontier, who were equipped with map and compass, with suitable clothing, with food in concentrated forms and with proper rucksacks to carry it in, and with German money for emergencies. Now some of these requisites had to be made in the camp, others could be stolen or otherwise acquired. All chance of receiving maps and compasses from home was gradually eliminated owing to the precautions which the Germans took to prevent their inclusion in the contents of any parcels. Though it was understood that there was a factory or workshop in the camp, the leading spirits were recognised only when chance exposed them.

The right to approach the Commandant with complaints was assigned to one particular officer, and to him only in the presence of an interpreter. As a rule all the complaints had to be made at the weekly conference, when the Commandant met the senior officers of all the nationalities, but on urgent occasions the Commandant as a rule would grant an interview, if properly approached.

One morning, when walking in the exercising ground near the Commandant's room, through

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the wide open windows a heated conversation was overheard. Apparently a British officer was talking in tones of quiet expostulation, and an angry Commandant was ordering the other from the room. Soon the door of the Kommandantur was opened and the British officer came out. He was calm and self-possessed. Seeing his senior walking on the path outside he went up to him and quietly apologised for disobeying the order which forbade all prisoners to approach the Commandant directly with complaints. The other said to him, "But you know why we all observe the order: if you go in and draw the Commandant like this, it entails some punishment on the whole camp."

"Yes, I know, sir; but the occasion was rather important, and I am sure you will forgive me when I tell you why I went in. I happened to be passing the open door when I saw that the key of the Kommandantur was lying on the edge of his table in front of the Commandant. We have been wanting a cast of that key for some time; it is practically the only key we have not got a duplicate of. The temptation was too great: I went in and started to make some rotten complaint, and whilst I was arguing I placed my hand over the key and got what I wanted."

There was a lump of wax in his palm with a good clear impression of a key on it. The exis-

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tence of a key factory was then an established fact.

It came to be understood a little later on that, when the services of an expert Jack Sheppard were required, recourse should be had to the services of the young subaltern whom we will refer to as 'X.', while his chief assistant shall be 'Y.' X. became an unofficial member of the staff and was thenceforward installed as Chief Burglar. The British officer who acted as Interpreter to the S.B.O. was the expert organiser who really controlled the contacts.

There was rarely any communication between X. and the seniors other than on official subjects. It was not X.'s policy to be seen talking to senior officers, to go to their rooms for interviews, or to ask questions. When he was wanted there was a regular channel of communication which could be made use of. X.'s answer to a summons was extraordinarily prompt: he did not necessarily answer a summons in person. Some junior member of his gang would present himself, either in the senior officer's room or would pass the latter in the passage and deliver his message.

The necessity for all this mystery and secrecy was not exaggerated; it was not a case of play-acting or romance. The Chief Burglar carried his life in his hand, and he knew it. To be seen in conversation with him, he was very well aware, might render a brother officer suspect:

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he never ran risks that he could avoid himself, and his loyalty taught him to study the interests of others.

On those rare occasions when he reported himself on business in person, the conversations were of the briefest nature: just a short statement of a case, X. standing meanwhile strictly to attention, and an answer such as "It shall be done, sir," and the Chief Burglar would retire.

It may be wondered how a Chief Burglar could find an application for his talents in a prison camp? Here is the story of one occasion which may give an insight into the nature of his activities.

A certain Australian officer, whose talents lay in the direction of electrical engineering, created out of odds and ends of metal, wire, screws, &c., a workable wireless receiver set. The writer of this record was privileged to be present at the inauguration of the wireless one night at midnight when the Eiffel Tower time signal was taken. The very next night, again about midnight, the room in which the electrical engineer was working was raided by the German guard; the receiver set was captured *en bloc* and was carried off to the Kommandantur as a prize. The engineer was in a dilemma. He had a fairly sound explanation to give to the Commandant to explain his possession of this 'model keyboard'; he had not been such a

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fool as to be flurried when he had discovered that his door was being opened behind his back when sitting by it the night before. He had instantly disconnected his wires (he utilised the bell wires in the top of the house as his aerial), he had saved his ear-phones from observation and had put a good face on it all when the electric light in his room had been switched on, but there was one flaw in his evidence. He had had no time to detach the crystal. Now the mica crystal would give him away ; he knew that the set was to be sent to Berlin for examination ; he knew that the set was now under lock and key in the Kommandantur. What was to be done ? He explained his dilemma to his friend who had been present at the opening ceremony the previous night.

The difficulty was quite easily solved. A message was sent to X. On this occasion the Chief Burglar answered the summons in person. An explanation of the Australian's difficulty was made, and " He shall have it, sir, to-morrow before breakfast," was the only reply. X. was as good as his word. The engineer on his way down to breakfast the following morning had a little parcel slipped into his hand : " Something that you were asking for ! "

The recipient was frankly astonished, but he was also delighted to recover his crystal ; he had known nothing previously of the efficiency and reliability of the secret service. His ex-

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planation that his apparatus was merely a model of a wireless receiver-set which he was constructing for the purpose of a lecture on wireless was accepted. As the thing appeared to be quite harmless and unworkable without an aerial, without a crystal and without ear-phones, there was no more to be said. The next apparatus that he put together was much more cunningly camouflaged and was never discovered. It was contained in the wood casing of his window and it defied discovery.

It became known in time that X. owed his transfer to Clausthal camp, where he was under close observation and particular control, to repeated daring attempts that he had made to escape from Germany. His last attempt had been within an ace of being crowned with success: it was on the occasion of this attempt that he had performed a truly sublime act of daring and unselfishness. He and a friend had succeeded, so the story was told, in gaining the Dutch frontier. They had been captured by the frontier guard in the very act of trying to break across. They had been arrested and marched under escort to the nearest guard-room. At the moment of entering the guard-room door, X. had contrived suddenly and unexpectedly to push his friend out through the doorway and to slam the door from the inside, shutting in himself and the members of the escort. The friend had made the best use of his opportunity

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and had escaped over the border: X. had set his back to the door and had fought to keep it closed until he was rendered powerless by the rain of blows that he received.

After his arrival at Clausthal, having first undergone a period of imprisonment, he was solemnly warned by the Commandant that he would be given no more chances, and "Your next attempt to escape will be your last," so he was informed.

X. recognised the futility of making any further attempt himself for some time to come and directed his energies towards the instruction of others. This became his mission in life as a prisoner of war. It was he who perfected the system of espionage in the camp, and the system of signal communication between the main building and the lines of huts. While the tunnel-borers were working by shifts in the tunnel, the Chief Burglar and his gang were on the watch to protect them from surprise. No German officer, whether camp, staff or visitor, entered the camp gates without his entrance being duly noted and signalled: when he quitted camp premises the intelligence was immediately passed round. If a strange officer appeared, he was watched and reported on until his business in camp was discovered.

There were rooms in the main building on the upper floors with little enclosed balconies outside their French windows. Some of these bal-

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conies were exceptionally well placed for observation and signals. As occupant of one of these rooms the writer was subject to visits from X.'s assistant Y., or other members of the observation service. They tapped at the door, entered and left again quite unobtrusively. Such a visit would be briefly explained in some such words as "A strange German officer in the camp, sir," or "The Commandant at an unusual hour."

There was one incident which sent the writer's heart into his mouth one day. He was just on the point of going down to the hall for his lunch, when from his balcony he chanced to notice a movement in the grounds of the camp near the boundary wire fence. Surrounding the camp and inside the wire fence was the strip of ground about fifteen feet in width, separated from the exercising ground by a line of low posts and a single wire, called the 'neutral zone.' It was a misnomer; it should have been named the 'Zone of Death.' Prisoners were forbidden on pain of death to cross the wire into the 'neutral zone.' The sentries on their beats outside the wire fence had orders to shoot instantly without challenge any prisoner who put hand or foot across the interior wire. There were dotted about this neutral zone a number of small spruce trees—little Christmas trees such as are grown all over the Harz Mountains. Why they had not been cleared away when the

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ground was enclosed for the prisoners' camp, no man can say. Lying under one of these trees, actually inside the neutral zone, his boots plainly seen from the high observation point of the balcony, was a young British officer! There was a German sentry on his beat moving at intervals back and forth across his front within a few yards of him. The sentry's beat was a fairly long one; for a fraction of a minute at a time his back would be towards the spot where the young adventurer was lying. During this fraction of a minute the latter would advance like a snake from the cover of the tree, go through the movements of pretending to cut the outside wire with a pair of cutters, and again retire beneath his shelter. His actions were being controlled all the time by X., who signalled to him the position of the sentry from a concealed position which served him as a conning tower.

This was merely drill: an advanced pupil was undergoing a nerve test at the risk of his life. Presumably X. put all his pupils through this test; no doubt he watched the pupil keenly after it, to see that he preserved his appetite for lunch.

Here is another story about X. and his activities.

The senior British officer was one day summoned to the Kommandantur. The Commandant addressed him in words to this effect: "One of your young officers has stolen the ruk-

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sack which was attached to the bicycle of the tin-room corporal. Corporal Kneller's property should be respected by the prisoners of war, for no man works harder than he to do his duty by them. Do you consider it fair to take his property?" It did not seem fair that the corporal's property should be raided, for the prisoners owed much at this period to his endeavours to do his best for them, but a guarded answer had to be given. It was, "All is fair in love and war. What proof have you that a British officer has done this?" "I have no proof; but I believe that if you give it as your opinion that Kneller's property should be respected, and if you express a wish that the rucksack should be returned, the property would be restored." "Herr Kommandant, I do not admit that this has been done by a British officer. I should indeed be sorry to think that Corporal Kneller has been victimised. I can make no promise, for I must disclaim the influence you appear to think that I possess."

However, a message was sent to X. The case of the missing rucksack was stated: no question was asked.

Next day the German corporal, going to his duty in the tin-room in the early morning, duly unlocked the outer passage door, of which he alone was entrusted with a key. He left his bicycle leaning against the passage wall, as he was wont to do. He unlocked also the tin-room

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door, entered, walked to his table by the window (the window was heavily barred and fastened), and discovered his ruksack hanging from a hook by the window *inside* !

Had that corporal been inclined to make trouble for the British officers, he would have told the whole story to the Commandant. He did not do so : he merely reported that the bag was returned to him, and that he did not know by whom it had been returned. The incident was closed. The Commandant made no further direct reference to it, though there was evidence later that he had made his own deductions.

Many escapers were indebted to X., this master of resource, for the means to complete their preparations for their flight across the country. Once an escape had been planned, but was delayed in its execution for one reason, a formidable one : the project was futile without the possession of German money, and German notes were all exhausted. All the usual liquid asset channels had been tapped and were at the moment dry. There were no known cribs to crack, no galleons were expected from the West. What was to be done ? The conjunction of the planets favoured an early departure, but to suffer a departure of any of his pupils inadequately equipped was not the way of the Chief Burglar. He hit upon a plan. It was of the nature of blackmail it was true, but it was an article of the escaper's creed that all is fair in

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war. There was a German electrician, a servant of the camp, who was coining money out of the prisoners of war by dealing in fixtures. For instance, this man undertook to provide electric cookers in many of the rooms, and himself provided the attachments by which the electric current, of which he was in charge, was available for use. When not in use, the cookers were kept carefully hidden. Now this was a dangerous game, and nothing but cupidity would have induced the German electrician to play it. The purchasers managed to assign to him the amount of the purchase-money (which was considerable) through their monthly accounts. When all the cookers he could hope to provide were duly installed, this enterprising electrician paid an alarm visit to each room, warned the purchasers that a search-party was coming from Berlin, and on the strength of this alarm he recovered all his nice new cookers in order 'to hide them in a place of safety.' Again, on the arrival of the large party of prisoners from Friedberg, this party found to their dismay that cooking in the rooms at Clausthal was not only forbidden, but that all appliances of the nature of stoves and cookers were confiscated, and many of them had brought stoves. The only thing to be done was to sell them *sub rosa* to the electrician, who gave them a price for them and disposed of them, presumably in the town.

The Chief Burglar traded on this fact. He

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invited the cooker merchant to his room: a lengthy interview ensued. Under threats of exposure and of reporting him to the Commandant, the merchant was finally induced to do a deal. He provided two hundred marks in German money in exchange for a like sum of credit to be passed through the accounts. It was made plain to him at the interview that exposure meant ruin to him, for it meant certain relegation to the army at the front, a fate of which he was known to be in dread. The sum was sufficient to supply the needs of many escapers.

The time came when the recorder of these incidents was removed to another camp. His departure was a sudden one. He was never to meet X. and his faithful follower Y. again, for they did not live to come away from Germany. They shared a tragic fate, but one which they both had courted. According to a message received at The Hague in the spring of 1918 two young officers, Medlicott and Walter, were shot in making an attempt to escape. That was no empty threat that the Clausthal Commandant had uttered!

CHAPTER XXI. LANDWORMS.

A RIFLE-SHOT fired from close quarters rang out in the camp one afternoon. The camp enclosure was full of prisoners at the time taking their exercise. There was a moment of strained attention, but as there was no repetition of the shot the camp temporarily resumed its occupations.

After a few minutes that half of the enclosure which was farther from the main building was cleared by the guard and its gates which led into the main enclosure were locked. The camp was more compact and easier to control when the outer enclosure, which contained the tennis courts, was cut off. This closing of the outer grounds was a precautionary measure and a collective punishment in one, for it put a stop to recreation for the day and for many days to follow.

The origin of the rifle-shot was soon learnt. One of the sentries on his beat outside the high wire fence down beyond the lower line of huts had fired at a prisoner of war at ten or fifteen yards' distance. The prisoner, a British officer, lived in a room in this farther line of huts ; the

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windows of the huts faced the fence where the sentry was patrolling ; the doors of the huts were on the other side of the building. Between the huts and the high wire fence was a strip of land some ten feet in width, then a path, and then the neutral zone beyond. The strip of ground beneath the windows of the huts was also wired with a single strand of wire and was named 'the interior neutral zone.' Climbing out of hut windows on the part of a prisoner of war was an offence, setting foot within the interior neutral zone was a crime, punishable with instant death (if the sentry aimed straight). On this occasion the British officer, who had been leaning out of his open window, carelessly had let his towel drop from his hand. Thinking, no doubt, that the sentry who was just outside the wire would understand what he was doing, he came round by the path, stepped across the wire of the interior zone and was going to pick up his towel, when the sentry without warning put up his rifle and fired in the direction of his legs point-blank ! The Englishman hopped back over the low wire quickly, and, filled with indignation, hurried off to fetch the German officer on duty in the camp : to him he told his story on the spot, indicating the hole which had been made by the bullet fairly low down in the wooden wall of the hut. The only comment that the officer made was to go out through the wire fence by a gate of which he had the key,

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and to pat the sentry on the back, the while commending him for having done his duty.

The British representative officer did not let the matter rest without due protest. He asked for an interview with the Commandant next day. The conversation, conducted through an interpreter, was much as follows :

" You will have heard, Herr Kommandant, of the shot fired by one of your sentries yesterday at a British officer who had crossed into the interior neutral zone near his hut in order to pick up his towel ? "

" Yes, the sentry was merely carrying out his orders. It is not for a sentry to use his discretion, for he is given no latitude in carrying out his orders to the letter."

" But surely this sentry, who could plainly see what had happened, could have permitted the officer to pick up his towel ? "

" Had he not fired, he was liable to be tried by court-martial for disobedience of orders. We never give our soldiers any discretion in the method of carrying out their orders."

" Then it was fortunate that the sentry proved to be such a poor shot ? "

" I have already attended to that point : the sentry has been punished with a term of extra musketry for having missed the British prisoner of war."

" May I be permitted to say that this pro-

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miscuous firing into camp appears to me to be very dangerous ? ”

“ It is intended to be dangerous. The prisoner of war in this case ought to have been shot.”

“ But, Herr Kommandant, you do not quite appreciate my point : it is very dangerous to every occupant of the camp if sentries fire into the buildings in this way. I know there was really no great danger to the British officer concerned in this case, seeing that the sentry could not make a straight shot at ten yards’ distance, but every bullet is said to have its billet, and some bullet may find its billet in some quite inoffensive person. The larger the billet, the greater the danger.”

The Commandant was a large and rather kindly man himself ; the officer addressing him knew, too, that he was not without a sense of humour. The Commandant was not quite sure that this British representative officer was not making a rather personal allusion to his own plump person. He looked graver and grew redder in the face as the other proceeded. The Commandant waited for the finish of the argument with an expression on his face that plainly said, ‘ If you allude to me as a big billet I shall be very angry.’ The other concluded his appeal in these words :

“ . . . so you see, Herr Kommandant, the danger we all stand in, for one of these rifle

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bullets may hit—for instance—Frau Wedekind, and what would the camp do without her? ”

It was a slightly hazardous shot, but it went home. The Commandant burst into a loud guffaw and his shoulders heaved with suppressed appreciation for the space of a few moments. The idea of suggesting that Frau Wedekind, the queen of the kitchen, whose superb proportions had so successfully resisted the ravages of starvation, the idea that this pillar of the camp might become a possible stop-butt for wandering bullets was too much for his gravity. He bowed and intimated that the interview was at an end, but as a parting shot he called out in his best English, “Vair goot ! ”

Some ten days later the same British officer was invited to the Kommandantur for an interview. The Commandant then said to him, “You have repeatedly complained of the existence of the interior neutral zones. I have never seen fit to forward your complaints hitherto. Ten days ago we had a somewhat painful interview with reference to this subject. I was pleased with the way in which you stated your case, and I made strong representations to headquarters. I am happy now to be able to inform you that orders have been received authorising me to abolish the interior neutral zones altogether.”

One grain of humour had been worth a cart-

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load of complaints. Here was a standing cause of bitterness swept clean away for ever by a Commandant who could make a graceful concession to good temper, though he had failed hitherto to yield to argument.

A word might here be said for the sentry who fired the shot. He had been sailing between Scylla and Charybdis. If he did not shoot he was a criminal, if he fired and killed he was a beast. He was one of the old men—one of the 'landworms' as they were irreverently nicknamed—(the *landsturm*). Back here in the heart of Germany there was no echo of the guns to be heard: it was impossible for this soldier to regard a young prisoner of war in the light of a savage enemy fit only for extermination; besides, these prisoners were always affable, if for the most part mad. So the landworm compounded with his conscience—that is to say, he fired and missed, knowing it meant punishment to himself for missing: what he gained by missing was an easier conscience for all time.

The landworms were amusing folk. Apparently before taking over duty as a guardian of prisoners, a landworm was put through a severe course of admonitions. He was taught that he must look upon all prisoners as vermin: consequently, he began by being truculent in his demeanour, suspicious, inclined to be ruthless. He went through rapid stages of disillusionment. Especially when on duty in the

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prison cells, where he was not constantly under the eye of one of his officers, where he came into direct relations with the prisoners of war, did he acquire education in the finer feelings and amenities of military life and grow gentler in his bearing and his tones. Prisoners who returned from cells related with joy how the ferocious-looking 'Captain Kettle,' for instance, a tawny-bearded ruffian, who bore himself like a pirate, with his rolling gait and roving eye, how this comic opera gaoler, when encountered in the retirement of the prison cells, turned out to be a totally maligned character. In fact, they reported in plain English that in the cells Captain Kettle 'would eat out of any prisoner's hand.' Later, when on duty as a sentry in the camp grounds he was known actually to allow a prisoner to approach him on his beat with a camera in his hand: he even posed before the camera when there was no one else there to see, although exhibiting a fine unconcern the while, with one eye fixed firmly on his duty.

A British officer one day was walking in company with a French officer back from a visit to the dentist in Clausthal; they had a landworm with a rifle in attendance, who marched behind them. The French officer could talk German. The landworm, out of the kindness of his heart, consented to march his party of two back to camp by a different route to that by which they had come, in order to give

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the prisoners a little more time in the free air. This added greatly to the pleasure of a most enjoyable outing, for the visit to the dentist had been a long-promised happiness. Before they came within sight of the camp the British officer said to the Frenchman, "Ask our escort if he would accept a present of a couple of marks from a prisoner of war." The question was put by the Frenchman, who spoke to the soldier over his shoulder without any change in his pace. The Frenchman then said, "The answer is 'Certainly not,' but he says that if he were to see two marks lying in the road he would pick them up." Two marks promptly lay in the road. The landworm did no violence to his elastic conscience; he happened to see two marks lying in the road, and he picked them up. That was all that happened.

It was by such methods that the way would sometimes be paved (with silver) for the purchase of, let us say, a pair of ear-phones or some other harmless little necessary procurable in the local shops. It may be objected, "How came it that a prisoner of war had two marks of German money about him?" He may possibly have picked them up!

It was one thing to have a friend among the guard and to be provided with the means to make a purchase, but to find an opportunity to communicate was quite another thing. The younger officers who frequented the prison cells

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made their own opportunities. Here is an instance. Smoking on parade, that is, on Appel, was strictly prohibited. No one smoked accordingly, for the camp staff would punish the whole parade by keeping everyone waiting an extra ten minutes for any infringement of camp rules of this nature. One day C. rushed in late for parade with a cigarette in his mouth : he was as promptly hurried off under arrest to languish in the cells for three days. When he came back from prison he 'very decently' made his apologies for having inconvenienced his brother officers—he had chanced to see a friend of his going on cells guard, who had promised to buy him something in the town, and he got himself run in in order to meet his friend. Of course, it had to be accepted that the occasion was of such importance that the whole camp must suffer patiently. The eyes of the seniors, who hated to be kept standing on parade, had to grow accustomed to the new perspective. With a good or a bad grace, as the case might be, they subordinated their desire for a life of ease to the exigencies of the service, exemplified by the younger members in their prosecution of schemes to outwit their gaolers.

CHAPTER XXII. BY THE WAY.

A GREAT reshuffling of officer prisoners was carried out in Germany in the summer of 1917. It may be presumed that the experiment of herding the representatives of the various nationalities together in one camp had not met with the desired results, and that in the eyes of the authorities at Berlin they required separate treatment.

The building of a long block of prison cells outside our wired cage pointed to the fact that Clausthal was being equipped as a British Home.

The Russians were the first to leave; the others followed in due course. Most of their rooms were taken by a large party of British officers who were being transferred from Friedberg.

Amongst the newcomers were many old friends of Mons days. There were several senior officers, including a Major-General who had a few months before been picked off a sinking transport by a German submarine in the Mediterranean; also, two Brigadier-Generals. The Major-General, now Senior British Officer in camp, wished me still to represent him and

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the officers at the regular meetings with the Commandant. He conceived a distaste for the Kommandantur. At his first interview with the Commandant he had rather forcibly characterised some camp Order as 'unfair.' He was hastily informed that he would "Go to cells for seven days" for the use of the word. The thing seemed ridiculous, but he went. There was no option. At any rate he was the first occupant of one of the new cells, a high distinction in the eyes of many of his juniors.

This was in the reign of Niemeyer. "I'll show you, you know!"

Also amongst the arrivals was Colonel G., an old friend. One of his hobbies in captivity had been the compilation of statistical records relating to the delivery of parcels and letters; he kept records of the inquiries, which the Germans themselves had initiated, into the subject of the plundering of food and other parcels from the time of their despatch till their arrival in camp. (For instance, they had taken great pains to discover the place of origin of the bricks that had usurped the place of the jam tins in a case which had emanated from well-known London purveyors, themselves above suspicion.)

These and other documents he wished to preserve; they were not incriminating papers in themselves, but a source of satisfaction to himself as records. So he consulted the British officer who was doing the staff work in camp,

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for it had become known to him that this officer had assistants among the younger members of the community who performed perfectly wonderful feats of intelligence work and burglary within the camp limits.

The important documents were contained in a little black valise with a lock on it. So the Chief Burglar was summoned to the staff officer's room and the whole matter was laid before him. Could the Chief Burglar suggest a safe place of concealment for the valise? Some place which would be easily get-atable in case Colonel G. were transferred to some other camp at any future time.

The Chief Burglar said, "Leave it to me, sir. It shall be done." The valise was promptly handed over; he asked that no questions should be put to him concerning the place of concealment; he saluted and withdrew unobtrusively. All the Chief Burglar's movements were unobtrusive. If a message were delivered to him through one of his confederates asking for a personal interview, he would respond to it with a promptitude that was almost uncanny. I think he habitually kept all locks and door-handles in the establishment carefully oiled; his footfalls could be lighter than a cat's; if one wanted him he was there. There was merely the voice of one standing within the closed door of the room, saying, "Did you want me, sir?"

Colonel G. on this occasion saw his valise

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containing the evidence of his labours of tabulation and statistics carried off to their place of safety with a deep sigh of relief. A load was being lifted from his mind. Some prisoners, especially those who led sedentary lives, were apt to brood over one subject until it became an obsession. In his case the anxiety to find a cache for his treasure was producing sleepless nights. The departure of the black bag signified the raising of the obsession.

Now in order to give some idea of the hiding-places that were available to a skilled burglar, a slight reference must be made to the geography of the building, this quondam hotel for trippers.

The top storey of the main building consisted of a series of attics with a communicating passage running the length of the building. Half of this floor was approached by a narrow stairway, and was at times allotted to the orderlies for various purposes, but the other half was cut off by a partition wall with a door in it which was heavily locked and secured. Access to this part was gained by the hotel staff by an ordinary staircase from the kitchen premises. As it turned out, it was the storing-place used by Herr Wedekind, the canteen contractor. Along its passages and in most of its chambers were kept multitudinous strings of sausages, sides of bacon, groceries and other stores which make up the stock-in-trade of a provider of food for a prison staff on a large scale. In fact, here

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the contractor kept everything that was precious, such as he might desire to keep under lock and key. There was one little room which he used as an office, and here were stored the things that were extraordinarily precious.

The time of this happening was one of the frequent periods of discomfort and suspicion. It must be acknowledged that of late certain quite bulky and important articles, such as crowbars, picks and shovels, had mysteriously vanished from the places where they were kept in store. These were regarded by the Germans apparently as essential for the upkeep of the buildings in the camp: to the active-minded younger prisoners they were regarded as being far more essential to themselves in their subterranean occupations than to the hotel staff.

A series of surprise searches had been made which had yielded the minimum of interesting loot to the unprofessional searchers. These futile inquiries were followed by a more professional effort.

One day there came a great search, conducted by detectives from Berlin. It was perhaps the most thorough and minute inspection that the camp was ever subjected to. It was this search-party who discovered a tunnel which the Russian prisoners had left as a legacy to their Allies when they were deported to another camp. The mouth of the tunnel was under the stage of the theatre in the dining-hall,

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but the tunnel had never been completed owing to the fact that the borers had come upon rock which they were unable to negotiate. The searchers found concealed in it a small store of 'escaping' clothing which, needless to say, was not marked with the owners' names. They discovered nothing of importance in the prisoners' quarters, though every room was carefully scrutinised in turn. But the search did not stop at the quarters in the occupation of the prisoners. Germans are thorough, and there was no reason, in the eyes of the men from Berlin, why Herr Wedekind's premises should not be searched at the same time, to see what were his fancies in the shape of secret possessions.

So the canteen staff were isolated and the detectives started in the basement among the beer and wine stores: they worked upwards through the building: they came last to the attics. In the inmost recesses of the holiest of holy places, where Herr Wedekind was accustomed to cook his accounts in peace and seclusion, or otherwise to carry out the manifold duties of his appointment, under a casual pile of perfectly harmless stores, they discovered a neat little black bag. Aha! Herr Wedekind, what is it that you keep in this bag? Is it not rightly a matter for suspicion that this bag should be tucked away so carefully under a pile of surplus gear? The bag was locked. It was a simple matter, seeing that no key was forth-

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coming, to burst open the bag of black shiny American cloth. The contents were laid bare. They consisted of a roll of documents, obviously the property of a British officer, and a set of burglar's tools !

Herr Wedekind was confronted with the contents. His astonishment at the accusation of harbouring the pernicious bag was too genuine for there to be any doubt of his innocence of crime. The conundrum which the detectives left the Commandant to work out was the answer to the question of the true ownership of the bag, and how it came to be in the place in which it was found.

The ownership of the roll of documents was traceable from the handwriting, and traced it was. Next morning the owner was summoned to appear before the Commandant. He was perhaps the least likely man in camp to be suspected of being an enterprising burglar. He was not young, he had not the build of a burglar, he was rather inactive from the effects of wounds that he had received : he was far too dignified a person to wish to be a burglar, or to wish to be thought to be a burglar. He was frankly horrified to realise the nature of the suspicion that rested on him. He was distressed by it and utterly at a loss to account for the burglar's tools. However, he wisely held his tongue, but he was obviously rendered quite ill owing to the suspicion from which he suffered.

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When the Chief Burglar heard of the trouble, gallant youth that he was, he determined at once to take the burden on his own shoulders. 'The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft agley'; our Burglar was no mouse. He went to the Commandant and claimed the tools as his property. He said that he had offered to take charge of the roll of documents, and that he had enclosed them in the bag with some tools that had been handed to him by a fellow prisoner in a previous camp. He said that, finding the tools to be an embarrassing possession, he had asked a German who had been employed at the time in this camp (whose name he did not know, who had since left the camp to proceed to the front) to keep the bag for him till the end of the war.

The tools and papers were confiscated, the Chief Burglar went to prison, the detectives earned kudos, Wedekind became an object of suspicion for a time, and life went more smoothly than before. Referring to the incident later in some disgust at what he regarded as his failure to outwit the German, the Burglar once said, "There is not a place in this camp where one is really safe in stowing one's surplus property. It was lucky for me that it was only my second-best set of tools that was found."

Among the prisoners' parcels there one day arrived a bandbox with some underclothing in it for a young prisoner. It was a regular

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'mother's parcel,' and it bore the air of having been packed by feminine hands with loving care: thoughtfully, even tenderly, concealed in the folds of her dear one's pyjamas were three civilian caps. No doubt these came in answer to some cryptic message received from the hopeful son in one of his letters home. The box was opened in the presence of the consignee: the caps were duly discovered: the other contents were handed over, but as for the caps the officiating German corporal said, "These will be handed over to-night to the Commandant with an account of how they were received." The corporal then and there replaced the caps in the bandbox, wrapped the latter up in its brown paper and carefully tied the string. The box was then put aside on a shelf in the receiving-room. At closing time, according to his custom, the corporal saw that the window-bars were safe, locked the door of the room, and the door of the tin-room beyond it, which communicated with the passage running through the centre of the hut, and took the keys away with him. In the evening he thought of the caps in the bandbox: he went to the room, found the parcel where he had left it, and carried it off towards the Commandant's quarters. On the way he chanced to give the bandbox a shake in order to feel certain the caps were there: the box shook like an empty box. He stopped in the way, shook again, looked alarmed and re-

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traced his steps hurriedly to the tin-room : in the privacy of the inner room he undid the string ; the box was empty ! It was perhaps well that the enterprising abstractor of the caps did not put the corporal's second-best service cap into the box as a makeweight to replace the three he had taken out. It had occurred to him to do this, but after a moment's reflection he ruled out the idea. That would have been adding insult to injury, and one can picture the scene in the Kommandantur if that thought had been carried into effect. The mystery was sufficiently baffling as it was.

The corporal's movements had been watched and noted. It was justly felt that there would be no rest or security for prisoners in camp until the caps were located ; and as the receivers had only been waiting for the caps to complete their outfits for a journey, they considerably lost no time in cutting the wire at night and removing the possible cause of annoyance to the open country.

Here is the story of an incident which occurred before the arrival of the Friedberg prisoners. There was one device of the British prisoners which was the object of extreme suspicion. There can be no manner of doubt that some of the Germans in Clausthal were conversant with the story of the siege of Troy, and of the wooden horse whose belly was crammed with fighting men, which was so innocently admitted within

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Troy's gates prior to that city's destruction. The object of their suspicions was a polo horse, and their misgivings were aroused from the moment that some British polo enthusiasts received permission to erect it in a pit with a wire cage round it in the outer bailey, known to the prisoners as the People's Park. Several players, who wanted hard exercise and to practise their hitting powers, used daily to occupy the saddle for half an hour or so at a time. Perhaps it was the expression painted on the reverse side of Dobbin's face which created so much suspicion : the camp artist had given the animal the mildest and sleepest of expressions on that side which faced the sentry's beat outside the wire, while on the side which regarded the interior of the camp there was an expression of dreadful cunning and mischief. Anyway, the horse became the object of daily increasing suspicion to the sentries, and by night the Alsatians, who were let loose to roam the camp after they had accompanied the sentries in their regular inspection of the buildings, barked at it in anger.

Hard by the polo pit was the golf course. On a bare portion of the People's Park the miniature golf links had been laid out by a prisoner bearing a name famous in the golfing world : he was brother to an amateur champion, no less. The course was a masterpiece of ingenuity, for all its nine holes were within so

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small a compass ; yet the defeat of its bunkers and hazards afforded concentrated enjoyment and occupation to a number of prisoners at the same time, each armed with a mashie and a putter.

There came a day when the champion four-somes were being played in delightful weather, and all the camp was sitting round the course engrossed in watching the exciting rounds. The sentries on their beats gazed in silent wonder and grim disapproval, especially when the excitement rose to a pitch and some players would be applauded at the end of a round. Dobbin, the polo horse, preserved his even balance, a calm eye to the sentries, a wicked leer in the direction of the players. At the very most exciting moment in the game an alarm was suddenly raised. One who had been sitting in the throng of spectators had taken advantage of the fact that attention was riveted on the play : he had wormed his way across the neutral zone, had cut a doorway in the wire, and in the broad daylight was to be seen streaking for the woods with a good long start which ensured his reaching cover. There was a hue and cry : the People's Park was closed after the prisoners had been hustled into the buildings. Dobbin, of course, was blamed for the whole business. One glance at the near side of his face and one felt intuitively that the good horse's doom was sealed. And so it was ; there was an end of

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the golf course ; no trace of Dobbin or his pit was ever seen again.

Meanwhile one good man, a tall active Canadian, accustomed to the forests and to a strenuous life, was speeding on his way towards the frontier. His effort turned out to be one of the finest of many great dashes for liberty. He went alone and reached the Dutch frontier, almost exactly where he had intended, after a perilous journey of two hundred and twenty miles at least. He pierced the German sentry line by night without being aware of the fact : he was then almost (if not quite) in a state of nature, for he had had to swim for his life and discard his clothes in crossing his last river. Having a studied knowledge of the country he was in, he was aware that he must be about on the frontier line, but as he had seen no sign of German posts, he ran on another mile or so to make the passage a certainty. Unfortunately, he had run too far ; there was a kink in the frontier where he had crossed and he had run through a narrow belt of Holland into Germany again. Coming on a cottage he hammered on the door to be taken in. A man was at length roused to open it. At first, terrified by this unclothed apparition, he banged the door to, but he finally tumbled to the fact that it was an escaping Briton who was craving hospitality, and, under pretence of taking him to a better lodging, he conducted poor Adam, not to the gate of

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the Garden of Eden, but to his fate in the neighbouring guard-room !

There was an interesting sequel in the camp at Clausthal to this escape of Colquhoun the Canadian.

A fortnight or so later the Commandant sent for the senior British officer. He informed him that the Canadian had been caught, and he added that on his return to the camp he would be tried for escaping and that a further charge of breaking his parole was going to be added to the list of his crimes. The officer asked for an explanation, seeing that all the world knew that the prisoner had escaped in broad daylight from the camp and that he was not in any sense on parole at the time. The Commandant replied that from the path that the prisoner had taken in his escape it was obvious that he travelled by ways of which he had a previous knowledge, and that it would be proved at his trial that he had gained this knowledge when out for one of the walks for which he had given his parole. He added that it was known to him that British officers were not to be trusted when they gave their word, and that every escape was made possible only by a disregard of the sanctity of the word of honour.

The British officer was so indignant at this insult that he said, " Very well, Herr Kommandant, I understand now that it is not safe for a British officer to risk his honour by placing

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it in your keeping even for the duration of a walk. I shall myself hand back to you my word of honour card in this room at 2 P.M. to-day, and every British officer will be advised by me to do the same." The Commandant knew that the refusal of the prisoners to go for walks would raise a question some day later from Berlin, which might be difficult to reply to, but all the same he dared the British officer to do his worst, saying that the others would not be such fools as to forego the opportunities for preparing for their escapes.

The interview had taken place shortly before the mid-day meal. There was little to be lost by returning the printed cards which were kept by the prisoners for use on the days when they were allowed to take walks accompanied by one or other of the camp officers. After each attempt to escape walks were discontinued for a fortnight as a punishment, and since attempts were fairly frequent and the punishments were not concurrent but consecutive (and the Commandant held several in hand), and since the recreation ground was closed, the golf course obliterated, the polo horse burnt and the tennis courts forbidden indefinitely, it really seemed to be a fitting moment for a protest.

The senior British officer went to his room, wrote out a request to all British officers, and pinned it to the doorway of entrance to the dining-hall, by which every officer must pass.

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No German officer was in the habit of entering by this door and the notice was seen only by the British : it briefly explained that, in consequence of the Commandant's insulting suggestion concerning British officers and their word of honour, every British officer was asked to support the senior officer by handing his card of parole in to the Kommandantur at 2 P.M.

During the meal the notice was quietly removed. Its effect was magical. Every British officer (with one exception only, for there is always one conscientious objector in every crowd) joined the queue outside the Kommandantur, and the clerk was busy taking in the parole cards and handing out receipts.

The Commandant never forgave the senior British officer for his share in this. It placed him in a dilemma : he was not permitted to put a permanent stop to the walks, which had been arranged by international agreement, and he could hardly represent it as a voluntary renunciation on the part of the prisoners. He had eventually to compromise with the British officers. The parole cards went back, but he gave an undertaking that the Canadian should not be charged with breaking his word of honour.

Under paragraph 159 of the German Military Penal Code Book, the punishment for a prisoner who breaks his word of honour and escapes, is death. Hence the extreme urgency of the case.

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As a precaution it had been deemed necessary to acquire the parole cards of any escapers who had left them behind, and to burn them. It seemed probable that they might be required as evidence in the event of any one of the escapers being tried. This Commandant was not to be trusted : if the parole cards were produced at a court-martial, it would be easy to draw the inference that the prisoners who were being tried had escaped at a time when they had rendered their cards to the Commandant as pledges of a promise not to attempt to escape.

There was undoubtedly in the minds of some of the senior officer prisoners a feeling of annoyance at the frequency of escapes, and they were apt to protest against the punishments which these attempts entailed. A typical grievance was the loss of the gardens which some of the older officers had cultivated. A little strip of allotments close to the guard-room, running right up to the high wire fencing in a corner where there was no neutral zone, had been handed over by a kindly Commandant for cultivation. There may have been ten of these gardens. There was the usual rivalry which exists always between members of the fraternity of gardeners, a great ordering of seeds, constant watering, the extinction of pests, and gardeners' talk in the evenings. The results were quite admirable and the gardens made a very picturesque corner.

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Unfortunately, some of the higher-growing herbaceous plants, such as poppies, grew exuberantly close by the wire fencing and attracted the attention of some escapers. To their material minds the high-growing plants were just good cover and that was all.

One morning in the height of the horticultural season when we looked from the windows on to the garden plots, there was not a vestige of herbage remaining ; the plots were dug and the garden stuff had been carted away.

It was learnt that the wire had been cut behind the poppies the night before and that one or two prisoners had escaped. Looking back on this prison time and weighing the case, I trust impartially, for the escapers on the one hand and for those who suffered in consequence of escapes on the other, it is difficult to solve the problem of reconciliation between the antagonistic interests. One felt at the time that for a prisoner to effect an escape was of paramount importance and that it must be an axiom that the escaper had right on his side. On the other hand, there is no reason why escapers should have been selfish, and it was the selfish manner in which some attempts were carried out which caused some of the older prisoners to give vent to their indignation. As an illustration, no one found fault with the splendid effort of the Canadian, but the escapers who utilised the gardens for cover were quite unpopular, among

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those of the prisoners who clung to their creature comforts at any rate.

The deduction is that all prisoners must make up their minds to face discomforts and renounce selfish enjoyments if they wish to rank among the patriots. If I remember rightly, that shrewd old philosopher, David Harum, said: "A few fleas are good for a dog; they keep him from broodin' over bein' a dog." So, in the case of the prisoners, a few worries were possibly good for them, to take their minds off themselves and keep them from brooding.

CHAPTER XXIII. NIEMEYER.

WITH a desire to acquire further knowledge of Napoleon, one day before the war I bought at a second-hand book-stall a work entitled 'The Life and Campaigns of Napoleon Buonaparte,' by E. Gifford, Esq., a book written immediately after Napoleon had been consigned to Elba in 1814.

My attention had been caught by the promise of the author to give an unbiased version of Napoleon's life and character, a promise expressed in the following words: "We shall not attempt by idle declamation to stain even Napoleon's name with charges, general in their nature and therefore apparently unfounded. Truth, the simple unadorned truth, shall be the basis of the following pages." Such impartiality and lofty promise was attractive. A few pages farther on the author was gleefully quoting a contemporary who referred to Napoleon as "a petty rascal, a little Corsican blackguard," and another who declared that Napoleon suffered from "a disorder vulgarly called the Itch, which being badly cured has produced scrofulous eruptions on his breast," and adding that Napoleon was also an epileptic.

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From this it is to be gathered that it is difficult to write historically, without bias or prejudice, of a contemporary whom one cordially dislikes, however honestly one may set out with the intention of being entirely impartial and judicial.

Now let us descend from the sublime Napoleon to the somewhat ridiculous Niemeyer. Let us take warning and discard abuse and mere hearsay evidence regarding his career and character. In writing of Hauptmann Niemeyer, erstwhile Commandant of Clausthal Camp, let us endeavour to avoid the pitfalls of prejudice into which E. Gifford, Esq., fell so frequently in writing of his hero and present a truthful picture of the man.

Hauptmann Niemeyer learnt his English in the U.S.A., where he had lived for twenty years or so before the outbreak of the Great War, you know. This information he personally communicated. His English was forcible, you know, fluent and fairly grammatical, but interlarded with colloquialisms and slang, of which he was not a complete master. He often used slang expressions, in fact, of which he did not appreciate the true meaning, you know. He used the words 'You know' once or twice in every sentence in the way in which they have been used in the foregoing; they have been so used in order to introduce the reader by a direct method to the man who is the subject of this chapter. When Niemeyer said 'You know'

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he said the words in an uncompromising manner, implying that if you did not know it before you jolly well had to know it now !

As an instance of his use of colloquialisms of which he did not appreciate the meaning the following may be quoted :

There is a latter-day slang expression "Dam-all" known to most Englishmen, and certainly to all soldiers, used by the vulgar to express the meaning "Nothing at all." Niemeyer delighted in the use of this expression ; he made use of it frequently when talking to Englishmen, to show how conversant he was with their slang : he would say, "Don't think to hombog (*sic*) me, you know ; I know Dam-all." By this he intended to convey the impression that he was very well-informed on the subject under discussion.

There was a celebrated occasion in the spring of 1918 when the Germans had been massing their forces secretly for weeks on the French front. Rumours of movements of troops westwards had already reached Clausthal, but at last the great offensive was launched by the Germans and the necessity for preserving secrecy in the Press no longer existed. On the morning that the official announcement of the great news was published in Germany, Niemeyer arrived on the parade with his face jubilantly red. To the assembled British prisoners of war he made this astonishing address : "You should all read

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your papers this morning, you know. Yes, the German papers, you know : five hundred thousand Germans gone West, you know ! ” Up went all the caps of the prisoners, and a spontaneous cheer rang out from end to end of the parade.

The Commandant was purple in the face now : “ I know what I speak, you know,” he roared. “ Twenty thousand Germans going West every day, you know : you think I don’t know : I know Dam-all ! ”

The prisoners could scarcely contain themselves. Twenty thousand Germans ‘ going West ’ every day was too good to be true, but they cheered again. As for Niemeyer, totally at a loss for an explanation of this exuberant reception of his would-be devastating news, he hurried away to the Kommandantur, there to think out the situation in the seclusion of his office.

In appearance Niemeyer was a typical German of medium height ; he held himself well, was florid of countenance, thick in the waist, in the late middle age of life ; he had pale blue eyes which were rather red-lidded in the mornings. He habitually wore the creaseless grey great-coat of the infantry officer : his hair was close-cropped in the German fashion to show the double crease in the back of the neck, and his moustache was bristly and fierce. It was told of him that at the call of his Fatherland he

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(and a twin brother out of the selfsame mould) had thrown up his business in the States and had worked his way to Europe in a Norwegian or Swedish merchant ship. This was all to his credit. After an experience of the trenches at the front it was recognised apparently that he was just the stamp of man required for duty with the prisoners' camps, owing to his intimate acquaintance with the Anglo-Saxon, his facility in speaking English and his down-right uncompromising nature. He was fond of saying, "I'm a Prussian, you know: I will teach you what it is to be a prisoner in the hands of a Prussian." So he was sent to Clausthal, and his brother went to enliven Holtzminden.

The number of escapes from Clausthal camp had been increasing of late; within the past twelve months twenty-six individuals had gained the open for a more or less prolonged run towards the various frontiers. Doubtless it was mainly in order to do the plumber's work and stop this leakage that Niemeyer was appointed. He arrived in the middle of August 1917 and was living in the camp for some weeks before it was realised by the prisoners that he was just learning his duties and feeling his way before taking over the duties of Commandant. They soon found that like 'the poor' they had him always with them. At first he tried to create the impression that he could not speak or understand English. He had two chairs labelled for

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his private use which were placed in advantageous positions, one in the People's Park, the other in the inner grounds in the place where the officer prisoners used to sit. He spent his time in listening to conversations. Where officers were gathered together there would Niemeyer be discovered (if one looked over one's shoulder), having casually brought his chair close up to the throng. If a tennis match were drawing a crowd, there would Niemeyer be, wearing a rapt expression of interest in the game, listening with all his ears (and they were capacious ones) to the gossip of the onlookers. If a prisoner stood to talk to some of his fellows in some darksome passage of the main building after supper, there would Niemeyer be in the deep shadow round the corner, drinking in the conversation. It did not take the younger prisoners long to comprehend the meaning of his tactics. The strange German captain who lived all day with, and mingled with, the crowd was always mute, but it was suspected that he understood all that he heard. They treated him as some doctors treated the shell-shocked, that is, they did their best to contrive to counter-shock him into utterance. Their conversations, carried on in his presence, as before a man who understood no word of what they were saying, were of so lurid and arresting a nature, that he was finally shocked into explosive utterance and forced to throw off the mask. From that

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time onwards he adopted entirely different tactics and daily took a more leading part in the discipline, though he still posed as a casual visitor, in the camp.

It was not till the 7th October that he officially ousted the old Commandant, Putensen. The camp groaned when the change was made, for it had learnt what to expect from him. The sixteen new cells were always kept full now, and there was a long waiting list in addition. Charges of 'bad faith,' concealment of food tins, of using disrespectful language, of failing to salute German officers, were brought daily against the prisoners.

The British soldier-orderlies were victimised. Pretexts for victimisation were easily discovered. For instance, one day three uneatably stale and mouldy loaves were discovered on the refuse heap (bread out of food parcels after having been kept for weeks unopened was frequently found to be quite unfit for food), and for this wicked waste of the staff of life all the orderlies were punished by deprivation of their food parcels for a long period. In reply to protests made by the Senior British Officer on their behalf the latter was informed that the orderlies were overfed and mutinous, and that the doctor had ordered deprivation of food for the good of their health. Other punishments followed; the duty of cleaning the latrines of the German guard was imposed on the orderlies

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by an order from the 'Inspection,' and life was made hard for them in many ways.

In the case of the officers, searches were frequently made; the rooms were carefully searched during the absence of the occupants at meals in the dining-hall. In some cases the searchers 'made hay' in the rooms, pulling down pictures and stripping the paper off the walls. No lights were permitted in the rooms, except between 9.40 and 10 P.M., when the electric light was turned on so that prisoners might see to go to bed.

The hall alone was artificially heated; as the winter approached the cold became intense. Water in the bathroom was 'off' for long periods and visits to the pithead baths were discontinued. The People's Park was closed; the two squash racquet courts were shut up. Fencing and boxing, two most popular amusements, were prohibited. Letters were delayed and the contents of food parcels were withheld. No satisfaction could be got by complaining. Letters of protest, written to be forwarded to higher authority, went no farther than the camp office.

In fact, Niemeyer's reign became a reign of terror, and his 'You know's' precluded all argument.

Now, regarded from other points of view, what is there that can, and therefore should, be said in Niemeyer's justification? Doubtless he was born without a sense of humour: that

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was his misfortune, not his crime. No doubt he was sent to Clausthal with a definite purpose. Also he had sworn a mighty oath (he said so himself and repeated the oath in simple unmistakable English on many occasions) that he would put a stop to the escapes from the camp. His honour as a Prussian was bound up in the achievement of his purpose. He set out to bend the British prisoners to his will. Trickery and cajolery were discarded, for by them he could make no progress. He felt that he was forced to rely on crush methods. So he wore his great clumsy jack-boots.

All the while that he was busy inventing methods for reducing his caged lion cubs to the meekness of lambs he was aware that those cubs were burrowing tunnels underground, filing window bars, absorbing and assimilating crow-bars and other workmen's tools, passing through locked doors and demoralising his sentries by bribery and corruption. He knew they were doing these things, but he failed utterly to catch them in the act. Any moment he feared to discover that one or more of his prisoners had got away. So he starved them, he counted them over and over again, he watched them, he bellowed at them, he shook his fist in their faces ; but they still held up their heads, they took no heed of him, they played together, they joked together and they smiled when face to face with him.

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With the assistance of a traitor, cunningly introduced into camp as an officer's orderly, he discovered the direction of their main burrow. He had a deep trench dug transversely across the path where the tunnel was suspected to exist, and at some feet below the surface his diggers struck the tunnel. Luckily the traitor had been closely watched and the tunnel-borers had been putting in strenuous work to undo the result of their labours, and had filled in and blocked up the near end of the tunnel, so that the entrance and the shaft were never found.

This tunnel business was on Niemeyer's nerves. He became nervous for his oath, nervous for his Prussian honour. Was he not face to face with ridicule such as no Prussian can bear? So he multiplied duties, piled on punishments, cursed everybody and threatened death.

In spite of all precautions escapes began again. Prisoners were locked into their rooms each night at nine o'clock now. Patrols of the guard visited the rooms to count the prisoners in their beds at intervals (this was a real nuisance). One night, even after the rooms had been visited and every bed had been found to be tenanted, an alarm was raised and two prisoners were reported by the sentries to have escaped. The prisoners in their beds were visited again, and this time all were ordered to turn their faces towards the bull's-eye lanterns of the visiting patrols. The occupants of two of the beds

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proved obdurate and failed to turn when called upon to do so. They were roughly shaken and turned by force: it was then discovered that the occupants of the beds were faceless inanimate dummies! Could anything be more exasperating? What good to fire shots at random, to double the ring of sentries, to keep the prisoners locked in their rooms till 7 P.M. the following evening? Two lion cubs were at large.

It will be seen that Niemeyer's life was not an easy one. He could expel the British soldier-orderlies, and he did, many. He could bundle a senior officer prisoner or two out to other camps. But this had not the desired effect of intimidating the rest. A climax came one day, a climax which put the cap of mortification on him and covered him with ridicule of the most galling description. Whilst the camp was shrouded in a fog this is what happened. The sentry outside the gate heard himself hailed in the tones of the Commandant. He was ordered to open the gate in quite the accustomed dictatorial manner. The Commandant in his big boots, his immaculate creaseless overcoat (with the collar turned up), in his flat round cap, with his usual leisurely step, strode through the open gate, tramped down the road and was lost to sight in the fog.

Only a few seconds later a second edition of the Commandant, excited, coatless, hatless and breathless, rushed from the Kommandantur

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and raised the alarm. Action was so prompt that the British Naval Reserve officer who had borrowed the Commandant's temporarily discarded clothing had had no time to obliterate himself. He was recaptured on the road only a short distance from camp.

It must have been a painful moment to a man of Niemeyer's susceptibilities when next he had to appear before the assembled prisoners on parade wearing the coat and cap that had been so polluted and disgraced. One can imagine the irritation that the coat set up! Not since the tunic of Nessus the Centaur caused poor Hercules such abominable discomfort is one able to find a parallel in myth or history. 'The Bulb,' that is, the young R.N.R. officer, once again visited the 'Jug.'

It is possible that inside this grey greatcoat of Niemeyer's there was a soft and generous heart beating, and that the outside of him was no true index to his inside. We know that Bismarck, for example, that man of iron who was so hateful in the eyes of Europe, who achieved so much for the German Empire, was a kindly genial giant when in the bosom of his family. Who can tell? Be that as it may, the brothers Niemeyer failed utterly to make any soft appeal to those whom they had in their custody.

After the war, when an outcry was raised to bring certain Germans to trial for alleged transgressions, the brothers Niemeyer (so it has

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always been understood) headed the list of Commandants of prisoners' camps who were 'wanted.'

There is an annual feast held in London since the war, when the ex-prisoners who were interned in the camps at Clausthal and Friedberg meet to dine together. At one of these reunions the diners found, facing the table on an easel, a life-like portrait of the well-remembered Commandant, cleverly executed in pastel by one of their number. It was appropriate that, after the portrait had been sold by auction for a very respectable sum, the proceeds were sent to Lord Haig's Fund for Ex-service men. Thus the last echo of Niemeyer faded and was lost in harmony and comradeship.

Far, far away, in the back of beyond, could faintly be distinguished the once-familiar words, "Get right away, get forty metres ago, or I will do you something!"

CHAPTER XXIV. A CHAPTER WITH A GHOST STORY.

It was late in 1917. For two years and a half I had been confined as a prisoner of war in Clausthal camp in the centre of Germany. I was utterly sick of the camp, 'fed up' is the only expression which would describe my condition of mind. I was so weary of it, had such a craving for a change of scene and diet, for some other cage to turn round in, that I was prepared to go through many discomforts to achieve my object.

After vain applications for a transfer to some other camp, pleading to share my captivity with someone or other newly discovered 'cousin,' or in order to become better acquainted with 'picturesque Germany,' or again for reasons of health (all of them pleas which sometimes found favour with the German authorities), I finally had recourse to strategy and decided to commit some enormity (in German eyes) which would inevitably entail an award of banishment from my present camp. Our Commandant at the time was Niemeyer. It was my privilege to attend the Commandant's office as the

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British representative of the prisoners of war. I determined to bait the Commandant, who had, with no foundation of truth, accused some of the junior British officers of 'shouting foul expressions through the camp entrance gate at a party of schoolboys.' I said the story had no foundation of truth. The Commandant rose like a trout to my fly. I threw out more bait : he almost had a fit of apoplexy ; purple in the face he shook his fist in my face and bellowed in his wrath. He said I should be made to apologise for having called him a liar ; that he would make me 'feel,' and that he would teach me what it meant to be a prisoner in the hands of the Germans. Finally, with a parting shot, I left the room declaring that in future I refused to have any truck with a fellow like him. I kept my word, and he used ostentatiously to turn his back on me whenever we chanced to meet in the camp. For over a month relations were thus strained until Christmas was approaching. All this time I was aware that something was being hatched for my especial benefit. At last one day the camp interpreter told me that a corporal in the Kommandantur had told him that an order had come for me to be expelled from the camp and sent to another, and that he could not say to what camp I was to be sent. I kept this information up my sleeve, consumed with excitement at the prospect of a move. On the evening of the

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23rd December at the evening Appel the order was burst upon me by the triumphant Commandant. I was directed to attend at the Kommandantur, where, as nearly as I can remember, the following dialogue ensued :—

“ You will clear out of this camp to-morrow morning at daylight.”

“ Very good.”

(Louder.) “ You will clear out at daylight, you know.”

“ Very good.”

“ I will not tell you where you are going, you know.”

“ I do not wish to know.”

(Louder still.) “ I will not tell you, you know.”

“ I know. To Spandau.” (*Note.*—Spandau is the gaol outside Berlin reserved for criminal soldiers.)

“ My God, no ! It is not to Spandau ! ”

“ Thank you, that is all I wanted to know.”

“ Your kit will be searched at the guard-room before leaving, and you will be stripped, you know.”

“ For the seventeenth time since I have been in Germany. Anything else ? No ? Good evening ! ”

The programme was duly carried out. Shortly after daylight I was on the road to the station, a corporal marching in front, a soldier with his bayonet fixed marching behind. The snow

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was lying twelve inches deep or more ; it was still snowing hard. I was missing the camp Christmas festivities: the Christmas dinner of roast horse, the play in which I was expecting to take a part, the circle of my friends—all these were being left behind. The soldiers had orders not to have any conversation with me: they marched with a fine important air. We took our places in the train in an empty (third-class) compartment; with feelings of happiness and relief I started on the journey into the unknown. Chiefly owing to the thickly falling snow I never once made out the name of a station through which we passed. I did not know whether we travelled north, south, east or west. We journeyed all day and into the night.

About the time in the evening when my thoughts were reverting frequently, in spite of mental remonstrances, to the subject of food (say 7 P.M.), we changed trains at a big railway station. Having at least an hour to wait there, I was marched into a huge waiting-hall set about with little tables.

The hall was crowded, for half Germany seemed to be on the move on Christmas Eve. Whole families were grouped round the tables. There were many soldiers on short furlough, no doubt some from the Western front, others from the east, comparing notes. The soldiers on the Russian front at this time were regarded as lucky fellows.

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I watched the food counters to see if there were any signs of things to eat, but I saw no eatables of any kind. There were some steamers behind the bar where coffee was being brewed : if the travellers ate anything at the tables they produced the food from little parcels from their pockets. I rather hoped my gaolers would fall to the coffee and would order some, but they merely sat and looked glum.

We had found some seats in a corner ; at the table also were a working-class family, father, mother and two children. The father did not wear uniform. I could not place him. The mother looked at me with obvious hatred : the children were just kids with round eyes and patient expressions. Now I remembered that I had placed in my haversack a paper bag full of sweets, sugared almonds, sent to me with my Christmas parcel from home. I produced this bag and offered sweets to the nearest child. Instantly the mother had the bag out of my hand ; I thought she feared I intended to poison her offspring, but it was not so. She rolled all my sweets out on the table, rapidly divided them into three groups, pocketed one lot herself and thrust the others into the children's pockets. I reflected that they must be hungrier than I ; the only acknowledgment I got was a withering glance from the mother as she collected her family and rose to move away. I wished then that I had thought about

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my sweets earlier in the day ; I might have eaten some myself.

At 10.30 P.M. I was ordered to leave the train. I carried my suitcase in one hand, my kettle in the other ; hanging to my waist were my tin teapot and a variety of my most precious belongings. The procession was formed in the same order as before. As we passed down the platform I caught sight of the name of the station ; it was Rahdon ; the name conveyed nothing to my mind. We came out into the street. The town of Rahdon was in darkness : we trudged through the snow ; here and there lights behind curtains and sounds of music told of Christmas Eve parties. Once a door opened and there was a flood of light across the street—a Christmas party was breaking up. We came into the neighbourhood of hotels. At one after another the corporal asked for beds, but when the prisoner was seen the doors were closed against us. At last a little German, proprietor of a small hotel, received the party graciously. He was warned by the corporal that no communication in German was permitted in my case, but he was quite undefeated by that and addressed me in French ; I quickly discovered that I had fallen on my feet. Soon his best food, such as he could provide, was at my disposal. Being aware that, when a prisoner of war travelled, his escort always carried fifty marks of the prisoner's own money for

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expenses, I ordered some of the best Burgundy from the cellar. The little man served it himself, and I ordered extra glasses for the escort. They never spoke but they drank the wine, and there was a visible softening in the expression of the corporal: he was a big fat man, he liked wine, and this wine was good. A large party of guests, men and women, filed into the dining-room shortly before midnight. They ranged themselves down a long table facing the table where I sat, and they fixed me with solemn eyes. After a certain amount of whispering, a young officer rose, sauntered down the room to where my coat was hanging on a peg, pretended he was taking his cigarette case from the pocket of his own coat, sauntered back and passed down the news of his discovery that my rank was that of an 'Oberst.' Army rank is army rank in Germany; it is something sacred that the brand of 'Kriegsgefangener' even cannot obliterate. This knowledge gave me my cue. I told the proprietor that I should like to be shown my room. I rose, approached the long table, clicked my heels together and made a comprehensive bow to the company. Like one man or one woman the assembled people sprang to their feet, bowed together and even wished me good night. The landlord went ahead and the procession re-formed: the landlord carried a candle: on the landing above he swung open a door, held it back and bowed

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low. The procession filed in. Seeing that there was only one bed I immediately began to divest myself of my khaki. The corporal, who seemed inclined to act as valet, stood by, took my coat, my boots, and then waited for my breeches. I handed them to him with my best air. Somewhat to my astonishment he carried them all away, leaving the sentry to guard me. He hid them somewhere outside and I realised that this was a precaution to prevent my escape : it was then that I realised, too, that I was labelled 'dangerous.' The corporal returned ; I was now in bed ; the sentry left the room ; the corporal turned the key in the lock, concealed it in his pocket and blew out the light. There was a sofa in the room, and I heard it groan beneath his weight as he stretched himself on it for the night. Whether it was due to the sense of relief and thankfulness at leaving my old camp, or the Burgundy, or the sense of security induced by the snoring corporal (he snored from the moment that his head touched the sofa cushion), or to a mixture of the three conditions, I know not, but I slept peacefully and dreamlessly into Christmas Day, a day which was to bring further travel and further happiness.

It was Christmas morning. I awoke, struck a match and found the time to be 6 A.M. With my escort I knew I was due at Rahdon Railway Station to catch a train at seven. I woke my

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snoring gaoler. He looked grateful for the attention and at once set about the preparations for the journey. The soldier with the gun, who presumably had slept in the passage outside the bedroom door, was summoned inside to keep an eye on me while the corporal went downstairs to rouse the establishment ; after that he brought in my boots and clothing. I do not think he had blacked my boots or brushed my clothes, and he carried no shaving water for me, but that was hardly to be expected. However, quite a good breakfast was on the table when we appeared downstairs, and the master of the house was there to do the honours. Then out into the cold snow-covered streets we fared and we trudged along in solemn silence, corporal leading, prisoner next behind, and the soldier bringing up the rear. We caught our train, which was fairly empty, a contrast to the trains of Christmas Eve the night before, when all the German world had seemed to be travelling.

After a cold journey of two hours or so we arrived at a station which I noticed was named Strohen. Here we got out. There was another train standing at the platform and I saw a British officer whom I recognised ; he was being escorted by a German soldier to the door of a carriage. We shook hands, and, uninterrupted by the escorts, exchanged a few words. He told me he was off to Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) on

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his way to Holland, whither he was being transferred in the first batch of prisoners of war, to be interned in that neutral country under a new agreement. He added that as I was also one of the earliest captures, my turn must come in a few days at least. This was joyful news, and it sent a thrill through me which made me quite impervious to discomforts and cold.

We left the station, walking again through empty streets, and soon came to the outskirts of the town. It now dawned on me that I was being taken to Strohenmor, a camp of which I had heard many stories, and a most desolate and dreary place of internment.

The air was crisp and cold ; the heavy clouds had gone ; the country stretched flat, white and barren, with here and there some straggling trees. Directly we were out of sight of the houses of Strohen an unexpected thing happened : the corporal turned round and quietly took my suitcase from my hand and strode ahead with it. Not a word was spoken, but there was a kindly look in his eyes as he seized that article of my impedimenta. For two miles we continued to tread the freshly fallen snow until I became suddenly aware that we were approaching a prisoners' camp ahead. Rows of huts lay packed within a high wire fence with sentry boxes at intervals around it. This cluster of habitations appeared sheeted in snow and ice out on the

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open plain. The corporal glanced at the camp in handing me back my bag, obviously meaning that he could do no more for me now that we were coming under the eyes of the sentries. The guard-room and Commandant's office were outside the gates. We marched into the guard-room and I was handed over by my corporal with the necessary documents and formalities. There was a warm fire in the stove, and this was a comfort during the process of searching and stripping. I owned two common wooden boxes containing my tins of food, books, &c. These had been brought to the camp on a hand-cart : my food tins were rolled out upon the floor and the boxes scrutinised. I was told I should meet these boxes again in the tin store later on in the morning. Under the escort of a soldier I then entered by the camp gates. The first person inside the gates whom I met was a brother officer of my own battalion whose eyes opened wide with astonishment. Curiosity had brought him there, for, as the officer prisoners' representative in all dealings with the Commandant, this officer had been told to expect the arrival of a British field officer who bore a bad character and who was to be treated with exceptional severity. Here was another delightful surprise for me on this Christmas morning and a cheering reception at the end of my wanderings. From this moment everything in the camp seemed to be *couleur de rose*. As we

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crossed the square there was a service being conducted in the chapel and we could hear the Christmas hymns being sung. They added another friendly touch of seasonable greeting. The quarter to which I was assigned had this merit, that it was a single-bedded quarter ; even if it might reasonably have been objected that there was not room in it ' to swing a cat,' I had brought no cat ; at any rate it was sufficiently spacious to turn round in. It possessed a little stove and was furnished with a bed and a chair. There was a hook on the door to hang my clothes to, and the chamber was lighted by a little barred window high up above the bed. What more could man desire ? New friends brought wood and a few bits of coal for the stove, for a wood-picking party had just returned from the moor with fallen branches. That the room was a prisoner's punishment cell in the disused camp prison was immaterial, that the window or 'light' was strongly barred was a compliment to my personality, that the bed was a plank one and the furnishings consisted of a bag full of straw and shavings, with here and there a thicker bit of wood and a bolster to match, were not the kind of things to worry a man with a hearty capacity for sleep.

I entered into possession, unpacked my blankets, tidied my cell and waited for the next event.

At the appointed hour I was conducted by a

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German N.C.O. to the tin shed. This consisted of a large outer room with a counter athwart its middle, behind which the camp issuers stood and passed across the counter the foods demanded by the prisoners from their own particular stores. Passing through a lifted gate I was led into the inner storeroom furnished with racks and shelves, marked and numbered and containing the tins and boxes of provisions that had been sent from home. My two boxes were on the floor, and I was given a number and the use of a brush and a pot of green paint with which to mark my goods. When the tins were safely stored the N.C.O. called a man with a hatchet. The interpreter was standing by, and when I saw that it was intended that my boxes should be demolished I turned to him and said, "Doesn't the N.C.O. know that the Herr Kommandant said I was to be allowed to retain one of the boxes for use as a shelf?" He did not know it. Under the circumstances that answer was hardly unexpected, for I could hardly have said that I knew it for a fact myself. However, the N.C.O., who was evidently not free from suspicion, asked which box I wished to retain. I made a rapid calculation in my mind, and pointing to a square deal box, asked for that one. I was right in my mental logic: the N.C.O. turned to the man with the hatchet and told him to break that one up. This was at once

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done and my square box was reduced to pure and simple matchwood. The interpreter then told me that I could take the other one away, a poor flimsy-looking tea-box. I let the Germans see my annoyance and disappointment, but picked up my box and went off to my cell. It was not a bad hour's work really, for the tea-box was quite an addition viewed as a mere piece of furniture, and it also happened to be blessed with a false end, which enclosed my diaries and a few caricatures and other trifles. This was the severest of all the ordeals that this poor box passed through ; it was subsequently lost at Aachen when I went to Holland, and reached me months later after I had lost hope of meeting it again ; it was still looking common, cheap and innocent.

Everything seemed to go well with me this day : my friend invited me to dinner with him in his own room in the more expensive quarter of the camp, and produced one of the most remarkable Christmas dinners that ever gladdened the eye or tickled the palate of a jaded prisoner of war. There was no doubt about the thoughtful care of his friends at home, nor, I feel constrained to add, any doubt about his own qualifications as a mess president. With two more guests we had a cheerful and delightful evening, which came to an end all too soon, as camp orders compelled us to return early to our quarters.

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Back once more in my cell I still had by me sufficient fuel to light a little fire in my stove. It was freezing hard outside ; and the stillness of the outside world was broken only at times by the coughing of some wheezy sentry or the whine of an uncomfortable police dog. By the light of a candle I hurried on with my preparations for bed, to get them over before " Lights out." It was a problem how to make the bed really comfortable. The sack of shavings that did duty as a mattress had suffered in character owing to the prolonged duration of the war, it was attenuated and lumpy : the contents were not sufficient to cover the whole of the boards with a good layer of stuffing ; most of the ingredients had become very finely broken up and powdered, with the exception of the harder chips of wood which defied attrition. In time it was reduced to subordination and the contents of the bolster were shaken down to one end and a string was fastened round the middle : thus it made quite a good pillow. Lights were put out, my stove spluttered, I disposed myself on the softest parts of the mattress ; I drew over myself my blankets and greatcoat ; I fell asleep, comparing in my mind our Christmas with the Christmas that must be taking place at home and with the Christmas in the trenches.

How long I had slept I know not, but there

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came a moment when I persuaded myself that I was awake. The fire in the stove was out. I shifted the position of my ear upon my pillow, for it was aching for a softer spot. I drew my blankets closer round me, for a blast of cold air appeared to enter from the window above my bed. This seemed odd, for I had seen that the window was sealed and was barred outside. However, I could not argue the point with myself at that hour, nor was it reasonable to expect myself to get out of bed to discover the source of the draught of air. Meanwhile the air seemed haunted with whisperings and there was a curious feeling of company in the room. My thoughts flew back to childhood, to the days when, lying awake on Christmas Eve in the night nursery at home, I had listened, sitting up in bed, to the whispers outside the door, and had thrilled to hear a movement in the stocking which was hung outside, as the elders of the household were endeavouring to cram in their all too bulky parcels. Cautious hands were feeling their way along the walls above me; the whispers were renewed, the inrush of cold air was checked. I turned my face towards the wall to will myself to sleep.

Down the side of the wall from the window in the direction of my bed came something stealthy, sliding, pausing and sliding again; it was useless to look up to see what it was;

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no light came through the window now ; the stars had ceased to shine, there was a body in the square of the window to blot them out ! They were feet that were hanging from the window : the body followed the stealthy faltering feet, the feet that were slithering down the side of the wall. The feet began to fumble over the blanket in search of a landing-place ; they found me, and planted themselves in the small of my back. A hoarse whisper said " Shhhh ! Sorry, old dear, but don't make a sound. There are others behind me ! " Were they burglars breaking into camp to steal the remnants of our Christmas feast ? Or were they the spirits of departed prisoners, clothed and booted, returning to hold court in the scenes of their earthly punishment ? Was I really awake ? Were these apparitions but the creatures of my anæmic brain, upset by the unwonted quantity and quality of my recent dinner and disordered by the unaccustomed nature of the mattress ? I could not tell : the apparition had passed on through the doorway before a whispered question could be framed. With face obstinately glued to the pillow I made no sound and moved not a hair's-breadth while the footsteps were repeated again and again.

The ghostly procession had ceased. The cell once more was clear : a drowsy feeling of relief followed as of a crisis safely passed. I felt that I was inoculated now and ghost-proof.

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It must have been some hours later when the same process was repeated : this time the forms came stealing from the doorway to the window. I felt their passage over my prostrate body, the tips of toes as they hesitated on my shoulder, the heavy movement of boots across my back. The cold draughts ceased : there was a gentle turning noise as of the screwing up of coffins or of window-frames. One had just to suffer these things to be, and to sleep the sounder.

Next morning when I met my friend he said : "A funny thing happened last night. You know that the row of cells where you are living is the old prison ? The new cells are built behind them back to back, with those high palings in between. I hear that the seven devils who are in the punishment cells broke into camp last night to get their Christmas dinner which was ready for them in one of the big rooms. They went back after midnight without exciting a suspicion on the part of the guard. Heaven only knows how they managed it."

But I knew !

CHAPTER XXV. THE EXODUS.

IN the spring of 1917 the Dutch Embassy in Berlin had assumed the rôle of neutral intermediary in the case of the British prisoners of war. The U.S.A. Ambassador, who had hitherto cared for our interests, had been withdrawn from Germany when the United States formally entered into the war. It was through the good offices of the Dutch that British and German representatives were actually brought to the same table on neutral territory to discuss a convention whereby the prisoners of these two contending nations who had been longest in captivity could be transferred in equal numbers to certain neutral countries. Holland and Switzerland consented to receive and to intern prisoners of both nations in equal numbers. It was agreed that prisoners so interned should be held on parole, and the two Governments undertook that any prisoner who should break his parole and escape should be sent back to the country of his internment.

The terms of the convention were known many months before any actual exchange took place. At first the convention was understood by the

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prisoners to apply to officers only. In some camps accordingly the officers who would be concerned protested against the idea of exchange unless the German authorities would guarantee the application of the principle to N.C.O.'s and private soldiers as well. As time went on a guarantee to this effect was given, and those officers then felt themselves at liberty to take advantage of the terms when their turn should come.

Still, there were some prisoners who refused to abandon their chances of 'escaping' from the country of their captivity. One notable instance was in the case of the young officer who has been referred to in these pages as the Chief Burglar. He felt that there was work for him to do yet in the German camps. He was the organiser of escapes and the tutor of escapers. So long as he was healthy and fit he refused to submit to so tame an ending. Since there was no compulsion in the matter he was permitted to remain.

Some exchanges of the very sick and of others incapacitated by wounds had been arranged early in the war; some also of medical officers and chaplains, after more or less lengthy negotiations, but no exchanges had been made of combatants who could in course of time become fit to take the field again. Committees of medical men, appointed by neutral countries, visited camps in Germany at uncertain intervals

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to determine the cases to be recommended for internment in Switzerland.

The first batch of prisoners to benefit by the new convention received their orders at the end of September 1917 to prepare for the journey to the frontier. In the case of those proceeding to Holland the place of concentration was Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle); those for Switzerland went to Constance. All the prisoners who went in the early batches had been captured in August and September 1914, so that they all had been three years and some months in Germany.

Orders issued in the camps prohibited the unwanted guests from taking away with them anything in the shape of diaries or other documents; prisoners were warned that a most minute inspection would be made of their baggage, and that the discovery of forbidden articles would involve detention in the country for an uncertain period for those who owned them. This warning endowed diaries with a new sentimental value, so that many risks were run in order to avoid handing them in.

No doubt the Germans were quite pleased to see the last of some of their guests; the guests were at least equally pleased to see the last of their hosts. Unlike that of the Israelites from Egypt this exodus was not marked by any presents of jewels and gold from those who were letting the people go; rather they searched the

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travellers with the meticulous care of a mother chimpanzee searching her offspring for the first time in the morning.

On New Year's Eve orders arrived at the camp at Strohenmor for three named prisoners to proceed to Holland. I was one of them. The kits of the three were searched and packed straight away. The prisoners were instructed to paint the name 'Aachen' upon each article. The start was made before daylight on New Year's Day 1918.

There was one room in the camp which was tenanted by ten old salts of the British mercantile marine. By special invitation the travellers were the guests of these sea captains at an early breakfast. Our hosts had risen in the night to cook the food and were all up to do the honours to their departing comrades of the land forces. I suppose there was not one of these men who had not some stirring tale of the sea to tell which had ended in his capture (or rather, I should say, of whom there was not some stirring tale that could be told, for the stories they told were not about themselves but against each other) ; not one old salt among them whose experiences, if collected and published, would not add a thrilling page to the history of the war and excite a feeling of pride in the heart of any Briton.

Fortified by a meal which consisted mainly of bacon and coffee—I can recall the scene now,

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the low-ceilinged room in the hut, lit by two or three candles, the circle of kindly faces, the extempore table between the beds, the almost overpowering smell of the bubbling bacon-fat—the party shook hands all round and started on the march to the railway station across the wintry moor. Day was breaking when it reached the station. The first change on the journey was made at Herford, where lunch was eaten in the station restaurant.

As there were some hours to spare after lunch, the two kindly soldiers of the escort suggested a walk in the country on the hill above the town. They wanted to give the prisoners a foretaste of the delights of freedom and they allowed them to ramble, merely keeping within sight at a moderate distance.

On returning to the railway station the great restaurant-hall was found to be now crowded with the travelling public. Outside the door the soldiers had a request to make; they said that inside the hall there were several German officers in uniform sitting here and there at the tables; would the prisoners conform to the German idea of correct behaviour and salute the nearest German officers on entering the hall? By so doing they would ease the situation and would be doing a kindness to the escort themselves.

Accordingly, on entering, the prisoner officers saluted the German uniform; other German

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officers throughout the hall at once rose to the salute. As a sequel the officers' private room, just off the bar, was placed at the disposal of the prisoners, and the restaurant-keeper himself came to offer them whatever he had in the way of refreshment and cigars before the train came in. The prisoners were glad to be in a position to make some little return for his civility; they gave him a little packet of tea, which he assured them was an almost unheard-of luxury. When passing again through the hall no attention whatever was paid to us by the general public. What a contrast to the attitude of the people three years before!

On the platform when the train came in, rather to our astonishment, the guard of the train, a woman, cleared a coupé compartment for the prisoners and escort by summarily ejecting the previous occupants, and allowed the party to enter into possession. The prisoners asked their escort how the lady-guard had been induced to offer this unexpected attention. "Quite easily," the guard replied. "We gave her a mark of your money for a tip." However, though the party in the coupé at the start consisted of the legal number of five, and though the escort did their best in battling with the travelling mob at the wayside stations, the number in the compartment at any one time through the night was seldom less than ten.

It was a crowded and uncomfortable night

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indeed. There was much peace talk going on at the time. One German soldier, on furlough from the Russian front, talked of the fraternisation that was going on there, of the regimental bands which played between the opposing lines and of the attendance of soldiers of both nationalities each day to hear the music.

We saw nothing of troop trains on the move or of transport trains. Undoubtedly the German people thought they were on the threshold of peace.

Aachen was reached at 10 A.M. the following morning. There was a walk of a few hundred yards to quarters in the hospital buildings attached to an engineering college, in which the contingent for Holland was being assembled. The rooms were clean and comfortable. A senior medical officer, who was in charge of the arrangements, was genial and smiling; he talked readily on the subject of peace. The conference with the Russian Bolsheviks at Brest-Litowsk had recently taken place. One felt that if the German nation had to be regorganised into support of the war for yet another year, some tremendous effort would have to be made, and that nothing short of a stupendous success would be of any use as a stimulant. The agreement with the Russians raised the hopes of peace in the German public, but it strengthened the hands of their military authorities in their prosecution of the war;

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for it enabled the High Command to reduce the man-power serving on the Eastern front to a minimum while the fighting troops on the Western front were correspondingly reinforced, in preparation for the last great effort to be made in the spring.

Some of the prisoners, thinking that a small excursion round Aachen would be agreeable, and wishing to display their knowledge of the history and attractions of the place, asked the officer-in-charge if he would grant them permission to visit Charlemagne's tomb. Quite good-humouredly that officer expressed his regret that his orders precluded him from granting their request, but added, "There is another reason; we ourselves have not discovered the exact position of the tomb!"

The party for Holland finally numbered 43 officers and 248 non-commissioned officers. As all of them had been captured in the retreat from Mons there were many greetings among old friends. Three years of captivity had left their mark, more or less pronounced, on both the outward and inner man in every case. Perhaps in some cases there was a tendency to exaggerate the changes in appearance, due to a notion that evidences of decay were becoming and on a par with honourable scars. Personally I had no doubt that a compliment was intended when I was greeted by one of the sergeants of my old battalion in these words,

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"Surely it is not the Colonel! Why, I am surprised! You used to be quite a smart-looking man, sir!" I was not quite certain in my mind whether the satisfaction I felt in knowing that captivity had induced this obvious deterioration outweighed my dissatisfaction in being assured that I was no longer a smart-looking man.

In the small hours of the 5th January 1918 our party was given an early breakfast and we marched to the railway station. The train started punctually at 5 A.M. It was with some misgiving that we noticed that our baggage was not accompanying our train. We were told that it would follow; as a matter of fact it lingered on the frontier and was not heard of again for two months, when hope of meeting it again had almost been abandoned. The train appeared to be wretchedly dilatory in the eyes of some of the prisoners who were impatient to be across the border.

Venlo, the Dutch frontier station, was our objective. The escort on the train had been specially selected for the job. Many were educated men of whom some spoke English; they talked and pointed out places of interest. As we neared the frontier there was less and less snow upon the ground; the country is flat, with endless rows of willows. At last a frontier post was in sight; so unimposing was the frontier, and there seemed to be such a marked

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absence of obstacles, that one wondered why escaping prisoners had found it so impassable ; but it was too late now to dream about testing its impenetrability.

A few minutes later the party was being greeted on the platform of Venlo station.

CHAPTER XXVI. HOLLAND.

I. ARRIVAL IN SCHEVENINGEN.

IN Venlo station we are over the border. We step out of the German train on to a Dutch platform and are the recipients of an ovation which is warm enough, if a trifle embarrassing. Representatives of the Dutch town make speeches to us, our own people's delegates from The Hague feed us, photographers are soon busy making pictures of us. We have no words at command with which to make suitable reply. Our brains are numbed; we have yet to grasp how it comes that an agent of the Y.M.C.A. is present, and what the Y.M.C.A. stands for as a helpful influence during war-time; we look forward to the privacy of the train, which is to carry us to The Hague, to enable us to collect our thoughts.

We dread the second reception at The Hague in the evening. Will it be my duty to reply to an address of welcome? I know I shall be tongue-tied. Though my brain is working very slowly I have just sufficient power of concentration left to plan a course of action. I

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will wait till I feel certain I am called upon to do something, and I will then call for three cheers for H.M. The King. After that, if I find that expectant eyes are still fixed upon me, I will call for three cheers for the British Minister and his wife, if both are present. More than that surely man cannot expect.

My programme, rehearsed in my mind fifty times, was in fact carried out to the letter. We were received in a large hall at Scheveningen (the seaside suburb of The Hague) by Sir Walter Townley, the British Minister ; with him was Lady Susan Townley. There were present also General Onnen, the Dutch officer responsible for the care of all prisoners of war in Holland, General Hanbury-Williams, who was to be in military charge of us, members of some of the foreign legations and many prominent Dutch people. Our King had sent a welcome letter of greeting which was read aloud ; the hall resounded to the cheers which we raised in response.

Instead of having to make speeches we were marched away to tea ; Lady Susan was hostess at the table. Our hosts were far too kind and understanding to expect anything of the new arrivals but a will to eat. We were quartered in hotels in Scheveningen, taken over for the purpose by the British Government.

Next morning I woke early in a proper bed, had a civilised bath, ordered a conventional

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breakfast and hurried out for a free walk, alone and unescorted, along the sands on the sea-front. It was raining; there was not a soul in sight. As I walked I became aware of distant gunfire. I mounted the dunes; the sound was more distinct; there was no doubt that what I heard was the distant fire of the guns on the Western front. This continuous dull booming of the guns was present with us till the day of peace, if one walked in the open spaces, away from the murmurs or the clamour of the traffic in the streets.

There was a special service in the Embassy chapel for us to attend that morning.

II. THE HAGUE.

We were no longer prisoners of war; we were now the interned. Reminiscences of our days in Holland should rightly be excluded perhaps from a book about prisoners, but gratitude to the Government and people of the country of our internment; gratitude, too, to the British Minister and his wife, who did everything in their power to promote the comfort and happiness of us all, compels me to add a few words about our stay.

In Holland, owing to geographical proximity and traditional friendly relations, it was natural to meet with neighbourly kindness, such as

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went far to compensate for the prolongation of our sojourn outside our native land.

The British Minister and his wife turned the basement of the Legation building into a club for N.C.O.'s and men, their drawing-room into a club for the officers, and they had refitted the better portion of the dwelling-house as a hive of offices, where work apparently never ceased.

Under the auspices of the British Red Cross some lady-workers were sent to Holland from England; the passage of the North Sea at this time was one of imminent danger from mines and U-boats, but this peril did not deter them; wives and fiancées of the interned were rigorously excluded from the first parties, but some months later the ban against them was raised, and some arrived to work in the hospitals and canteens. Lady Susan took charge of the fiancées and arranged for their weddings from her house. My wife arrived in June and went to the officers' hospital in Clingendael, a lovely country house, lent by Baroness M. de Brien and run by her.

To the Y.M.C.A. the interned were indebted for the splendid arrangements that were made for their comfort and relaxation.

Miss Vulliamy was the originator and official organiser of many schemes for their welfare.

Baron A. van Heeckeren van Kell was the Dutch staff officer who was appointed liaison

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officer. He smoothed many difficulties for us all with his kindly suggestions and advice.

Another reason of mine for touching on the experiences in Holland is that it enables me to bring these pages to a conclusion on a note of happiness and even gaiety, the antithesis to the gravity and gloom of the opening chapters.

For months after entering Holland my memory was very defective ; it served me in patches, but I could not be sure of myself. The social life at The Hague alarmed me, so I decided to drop out of it as far as possible. I luckily found the ideal place to live in, and, together with a few friends who felt as I did, applied for and obtained leave to retire to the 'Kieviet,' a tea-house on the far side of the Haagsche Bosch, three miles out of The Hague by road. Here we rented all the available bedrooms, acquired a certain number of dogs, met with a cordial welcome and the kindest help from some of our nearest Dutch neighbours, played golf on the club links which were not far off, purchased bicycles and lived in the open air.

We still had various duties at The Hague, but these were not arduous ; there was a certain number of evening parties also to attend in The Hague. Riding my bike through the avenues in the woods when returning from these parties at midnight I enjoyed most keenly the sense of freedom from restraint. The woods are filled

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with glorious trees, the nights were cold, and one revelled in the stillness and the beauty of the avenues.

Occasionally in the mornings on the way into The Hague I met Their Majesties the Queen and the Queen-Mother taking their morning exercise along one of the many pathways. On these occasions one used first to encounter a cyclist-policeman, who held up his hand to bring one to a halt and asked one to dismount. He would then stand by one's side and remain there till the two walking ladies had passed, when he would remount and ride on ahead once more. My salute was always acknowledged by the Queen-Dowager. H.M. the Queen never looked in one's direction.

Everyone soon learnt to appreciate the character of the Queen of Holland. By natural gifts, education and the force of circumstances having become one of the foremost diplomatists of Europe, she was scrupulously careful to show no favour, which might be open to misconstruction, to any individual of the contending nationals. Holland, during the war, occupied an unenviable position between the devil and the deep sea. An inclination of the head in the direction of the deep sea might have been construed into a slight by the devil! No Queen who was not a past-mistress in guiding a ship of state could have steered the barque 'Holland' through the troubled waters, which

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bordered the maelstrom, so cleverly or with such conspicuous success.

The area through which we might roam, without special leave, extended four miles along the coast on either side of The Hague and had a depth of four miles. If we wished to go outside this limit, to visit Amsterdam or Delft for instance, it was possible to get a special permit, but the authorities were a little slow in issuing permits. The object of limiting the area so narrowly was to prevent any chance meeting between British and German internees. The Germans were interned at Rotterdam and were equally restricted. No doubt the Dutch Government feared there might be a fracas if German met Briton in the streets of Rotterdam or The Hague. As a matter of fact such encounters were by no means rare, and they did not occasion any loss of dignity on either side.

En camouflage—i.e., disguised as civilians, it was found possible to ride a bike along the roads outside the area without exciting attention, and many excursions were made among the bulb-fields when it came to be their season, and visits were paid to the near towns, such as Leyden and Haarlem, to make the acquaintance of their picture-galleries and old houses.

It was in the bulb season on the occasion of a national holiday that one saw the people of Holland in their best and happiest mood. From early dawn on these days the inhabitants

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of the city came trooping out along the roads and lanes in pairs, in families or in companies, laughing, singing, chattering, on their way to the open country. It was almost a realisation of Utopia; most of the girls were dressed in white, were bare-headed and neatly shod; all were on foot or rode cycles. The day was spent in picnics by the woods or gathering blooms in the fields; the village tea-houses, too, were crowded with glad throngs, and later in the evening the same holiday-makers sang their way back with arms full of flowers or riding their garlanded bicycles. I do not know if it is always so, or if it was due to war-time, that flowers in basket loads were to be had for the asking, but this year the fields of bulbs had no sooner clothed themselves in sheets of pink, pale blue or primrose, than the owners set about methodically cutting out the blooms, which were stacked by the side of the canals, either to be cast into the water or left to rot, and later to do duty as manure.

III. DELFT.

One of the expeditions (made with permission) which I most enjoyed was a visit to the quaint old town of Delft. Some of us fortunately had made friends with Mr Sluyterman, Professor (afterwards Rector) of the Delft University.

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He suggested the things we should see and gave us introductions. Many of the beautiful old gabled houses which border the network of canals are exactly the same to-day as when painted 300 years before by the old Dutch masters. One had met them in the public galleries already and recognised their features. The representation of the houses on canvas were as vivid and true to life as Frans Hals' portraits must have been. In his groups of the military gildsmen at Haarlem, where one sees the same faces repeated on successive canvases from youth to old age, one realises how true they were as portraits and how their characters developed.

One of the two splendid old churches in Delft has a leaning tower; it has the air of being slightly overpowered by the odours arising from the canal which runs or, rather, stagnates at its base. The town canals are filled with a liquid of mediæval vintage, which from age has assumed the gravity and density of oil, too solid to be 'troubled' by any passing barge, but lazily content to smile in fat ripples at any temporary displacement. On a hot still day, such as that on which we paid our visit, the water of the canals lent an air of antiquity to the most modernised region. It occurred to me at the time that any foreign body cast into the waters of a Dutch canal must necessarily float. It so happened that not many days

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later I was to meet with an experience which was to give me a practical confirmation of my suspicion ; in fact, I was destined to play the part of the foreign body.

The other great church, which is the burial-place of the House of Orange, is a noble building of fine proportions ; it possesses a glorious tower and spire. Possibly the reason for the immense height of some of the spires of the Dutch churches is to be discovered in an attempt to compensate for the general flatness of the land. It may be due to a feeling that there must be something lofty in the land on which to rest a claim for adequate recognition by other nations.

The bells in this church can be seen in their belfry by the passer-by ; they play a variety of quaint chimes at the bidding of the old clock in the tower. Inside, like many Lutheran churches, it has the austere and frigid aspect conveyed by whitewashed walls and plain glass windows ; the beauty of proportion and sense of symmetry suffer in the presence of the big ugly square pews. In cold weather the members of the congregation may save themselves from perishing by using the charcoal boxes which are provided, as hot bottles or foot-warmers.

The interned were not permitted to visit the Delft potteries at work ; however, we saw the workshops and collections of Mr Schoolte, the church window maker, as a compensation.

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The Dutch idea of a museum differs from ours ; their manner of preserving ancient buildings and of furnishing them with collections of the appropriate domestic contents is much more attractive than our use of the word, as a rule, implies. With us we expect to see series of exhibits, displayed in rows and in glass cases, labelled and tabulated. But in Holland, when a typical old house or historical castle is taken over by the State, it is furnished throughout with the best examples to be found of the furniture and decorations of its proper period exactly as it existed in its palmiest days ; there is nothing admitted which is superfluous or wrong in date. The result conveys a sense of harmony and propriety, and a most useful lesson at the same time in domestic history. Delft has some delightful examples of this type of museum ; there are rooms which are entirely walled with old painted tiles.

IV. THE CANALS.

My closer acquaintance with the waters of a Dutch canal was the result of an accident.

With a friend I had bicycled to the golf links to play a round. It was a fine sunny day with occasional gusts of wind. There was a short-cut from the golf club house to our road home by a path which crossed a canal (not a very

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wide one) by means of a plank bridge, to which, of course, there was no hand-rail. Being no great performer as a cyclist I had hitherto preferred the longer way round to cross by a regular bridge, leaving my friend to negotiate the planks alone.

After our round on this occasion, feeling pleased with myself (quite unjustifiably, I admit) and endued with a false sense of security of balance, I followed my friend over the plank. Now, the pathway reached the bridge at a slight angle and I slowed down in order to approach it carefully. That slowing down was my undoing, for I had not sufficient way on to carry me over the planks without pedalling. Also there came a gust of wind when I was barely half-way across. My bike staggered, jibed in the wind and resented my sudden pressure on the pedals; it skipped nimbly over the side and we disappeared headforemost into the depths 'pompholugo-paphlasmasi,' as the old Greek poet onomatopoetically has it. My friend heard the splash and discovered that I had failed to follow him. The next moment he saw my cap upon the surface of the water, and he saw also some heavy bubbles bursting round it (caused by laughing under water, I presume).

My head then tardily appeared, but it was black with slimy ooze gathered from the bed of the canal. It was with a touch of pride that

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I realised that I still grasped the handlebar of the machine as I stood up almost chin-deep in the water, for to let the reins go when one has come a cropper has ever been a thing to cause a blush of shame.

My friend's way of showing his concern at my accident was a little unexpected. Instead of rushing for a landing-net, of shouting for assistance, or even of addressing me with words of sympathy, he sat down on the bank and laughed, and laughed immoderately. It seemed to be exactly the comedy he required to break the spell of gloom which had settled down on him as a prisoner of war. At least I had the satisfaction of knowing that I had done him this great service, though unwittingly.

As for the little caddies (and caddises ?) who lined the near bank solemn-eyed as I struggled my slimy way to land, they behaved in quite an exemplary manner ; they merely smiled. They thought I was trick-riding ; I gathered as much from their manner, so I promised them a show again another day, if they were good.

So it was that I felt that as an expert I could speak in a more intimate way than others of my acquaintance on the subject of Dutch canals. I could testify without fear of contradiction to the buoyancy, consistency and flavour of their waters.

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V. LEEUWARDEN.

One month prior to the declaration of Peace I was sent to Leeuwarden, the capital town of the province of Friesland, as senior British interned officer there. My wife was at the same time transferred at her own request from Clingendael Hospital to Leeuwarden as matron of the soldiers' hospital. My new duties comprised the organisation and opening of the Leeuwarden interned soldiers' camp. Some newly built Dutch soldiers' barracks were placed at our disposal; there were nearly one thousand ex-prisoners of all ranks sent there for internment.

Leeuwarden seemed curiously out of the world. There were no other English women there for the matron of the hospital to meet. It was difficult to find lodgings of any description, but we discovered rooms over a confectioner's shop in the suburbs. I believe the majority of the less enlightened of the inhabitants follow their traditions and sleep in cupboards in the walls. Our rooms were very small, but we had the use of an additional attic where we could rig up a bath and dressing-room.

Branches of the B.R.C. and Y.M.C.A., those most efficient organisations which accompanied all camps of the interned, assisted materially

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in finding employment and recreation for the soldiers in a town where hitherto no recreation grounds and no gymnasium had existed.

Repatriation Boards, which were soon busy, played havoc with my camp staff; one after another the members were found to be 'unfit' and were sent home to England.

The Burgomaster and the people of the place were most kind and anxious to provide us with everything of which we stood in need. Friesland is the flattest of all countries I have ever seen; the meadows are the home of the piebald breed of cattle which has become so famous throughout the world. Leeuwarden is the centre of a great trade in cattle and cheese; high walls and barricades of cheeses meet the eye at every turn. Canals permeate the town, having wharves and storehouses for cheese on either bank; the produce is carried on the canals in big rotund barges; when walking in the town one found oneself frequently in a queue, waiting for a swing-bridge to close after letting through a barge or string of barges.

The town is picturesque, for it is well-endowed with open spaces, good trees, lawns and old churches; it had besides a considerable juvenile population with time on their hands to spend in gazing at, and following, the interned; there were shouts of "English boy" from the children whenever they encountered a khaki uniform. In the china shops old tiles and bits of delf

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could be found and bought for the future home in England.

Office work kept one occupied and the days passed quickly, while the news, which one could read posted in a window in the street, grew daily more exciting. Up to the last moment the Dutch people would not believe that the end of the war could be in sight so long as the Allies talked of dictating terms to Germany ; they looked on the Allies as being over-optimistic and unwise in their demands. When finally the news arrived that the Emperor of Germany had fled and was seeking an asylum in Holland there was frank astonishment, and real interest was shown in the prospect of an end to the war. It was not an occasion for superlatives with them.

Events followed one another at breakneck pace now. No sooner were tidings communicated that an armistice was concluded than orders came tumbling in to arrange for the closing down of the camp. These were immediately followed by instructions for the embarkation of the soldiers in vessels at Rotterdam, with the time-tables of trains from Leeuwarden. Not a day was lost, for every day's delay would cost money, and the policy was to close accounts at once.

We wished to leave Leeuwarden in as dignified a manner as possible, and we hoped that after the parting with their guests a not unfragrant

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memory would remain in the town. We had just time to arrange a farewell party in the big theatre, to which all the interned invited the friends they had made in the place. The utmost efforts were put forth to provide a variety programme of entertainment. The theatre was filled with a kindly audience who were ready to be pleased, and the farewells made from the stage met with a cordial response. To the staff of the Y.M.C.A. this happy ending was greatly due.

My wife had her orders from her own authorities, and was destined to reach London a day or two in advance of the rest of us, for the ship which carried us was bound for the Humber. Passages were made with the greatest caution and fogs added to the difficulties, the ships being preceded by minesweepers to clear a course through the minefields.

Now it was known that all the unwanted dogs of Leeuwarden had attached themselves to the barracks; they "claimed kindred there and had their claim allowed" (not that these Dutch dogs had heard the foreign soldiers addressed as 'schweinehund'), and it was foreseen that a Tommy would not part with a dog so long as he thought there was a chance of smuggling him home in a ship. With a view, therefore, to prevent unhappy dogs from being carried away from the town and being turned adrift homeless in Rotterdam, an order was

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issued on the eve of departure forbidding dogs being taken in the train.

After the troops had settled into the carriages of the train, although I had seen no led dogs on the line of march to the station, I felt mistrustful of an obedient compliance with the order, so, in the interests of the dogs, if any there should be, the sergeant-major and a party were sent to visit each compartment to eject any dogs found under the seats.

Suspicion was amply justified. In the hubbub of farewells on the platform some of the Frieslanders, in league with the Tommies, had managed to transfer bundles or baskets with canine cargo into the carriages. The number of dogs now hurriedly turned out on to the platform was surprising and the variety of species was unique.

The guard's whistle was blown and the train began to move while the dogs were standing on the platform wearing puzzled expressions. Though doubtless they had picked up the meaning of a few English words the dogs were evidently at a loss to know what their god-like new masters expected of them on this occasion. Why, for instance, had the divinities (who were obviously kindly, for they fed one to repletion) had them conveyed and put under the seats, and then enjoined silence with their boot-heels? Why had they suddenly bundled them unceremoniously out of the carriages? One had to

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wait for the honied words from the super-masters to discover what wonderful treat they had in store for them.

The train steamed slowly out of the town following a snake-like course, winding this way to avoid a dam, that way to skirt a wide canal, doubling on its tracks one moment so that it headed almost for the platform, then curving over the flats to regain the general direction of advance.

From the soldiers there came no sign till the train was well upon its way; then suddenly from every window they called in chorus to their dogs. There was a swift movement on the platform and at once every dog was galloping for all he was worth after the train. Now they understood! They followed the track of the rails; they soon gained on the train, which was making slow progress. The leading dogs could easily be distinguished; their masters shouted to them by name; the dogs were spurred on to making redoubled efforts. Such a dog-race was never seen; the big dogs led, the little dogs panted behind, strung out for hundreds of yards. There was one great brindled tyke with a strain of bulldog in him who came ahead in grimmest earnest. It appeared he responded to the name of 'Pongo.' Pongo was the kind of dog that could fight savagely and love fiercely. For a time he drew level with the train, closely followed by some of his bigger comrades; he

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was an ugly brute but he had the heart of a lion. Suddenly Pongo took a toss; at a moment when his gaze was fixed upon a gracious face at one of the carriage windows he put a foot wrong somewhere and over he turned. He was instantly up again and soon once more in the lead, but the train was now steering a straighter course and was gaining pace; the dogs were being left behind. At the last curve the race was for a little time in full view, the dog-owners in a state of great enthusiasm, urging on their favourites and shouting odds as at a race meeting.

Thus Leeuwarden was left behind. The prospect was too exhilarating to leave room for any deep regrets at the parting in the minds of the soldiers. The emotions of the luckless dogs were probably acute for the moment, but not long-lived. At any rate the dogs were saved from being carried away from their native town. When last seen they were still sticking to the race, it is true, and Pongo was still leading, but I do not think that he ran on to Rotterdam, great-hearted dog though he was.

In fact, I feel convinced that Pongo slept in Leeuwarden again that night; also that he bit, and bit heartily, the first dog that rashly chaffed him by barking at him the canine equivalent to "Yah! English boy!" as he padded dejectedly up the street.

Meanwhile the god-like masters were heading for Hull, home and happiness.

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